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A Catholic Tale.



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1860.



TO HER

WHOSE GUARDIAN HAND

FIRST SOWED IN MY HEART THE GOOD SEED OF FAITH

WHICH SPRINGETH UNTO IMMORTALITY,

To my loving and idolized Mother,

THESE FLOW'ERS OF CATHOLICISM,

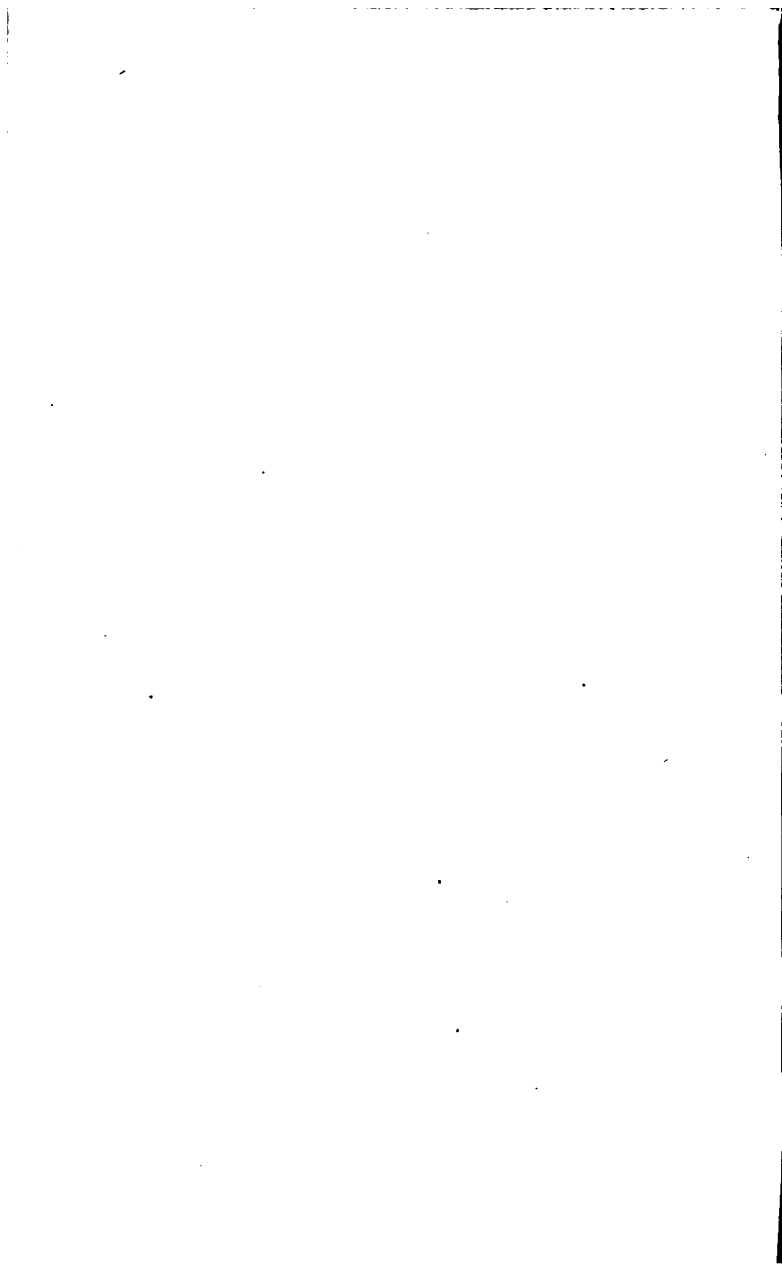
CULLED ON THE ITALIAN SOIL,

ARE FONDLY

Dedicated by the Authoress,

FIorentina STRAKER.

St. PONS, NICE,
8th December, 1859.



THE CONVENT FLOWER.

CHAPTER I.

AN erroneous view is generally taken with regard to religious houses; a convent brings to the mind certain associations in which the memories of Auto da Fe, inquisitions, and deeds of crime, form a heterogeneous mass, too painful for a sensitive mind to dwell upon, too hideous to inquire into. Perhaps many such obsolete visions would have been dispelled from the thoughts of those who, on a fine summer morning, passed the gates of an old-fashioned mansion, in the town of —, in England; through those portals which, though silent, spoke of life within, came a distant sound, gradually increasing till it broke forth into a sweet hubbub of fresh juvenile voices: clear and thrilling they came, bringing to the hearer that cheering and purifying emotion which a child's voice never fails to awaken in the heart; blessed thoughts! which seem to us like a dream of happiness gone by, like the perfume of innocent days long faded away, and called into fresh life by the warble of the little voice, like withered flowers under the first breath of spring. The nuns of the Sacré Cœur had lately taken possession of this house, the remains of an ancient abbey, which, like so many others, had

survived the faith of our fathers, and remains a tradition of those days of old when England was all Catholic. In many instances, a modern creed has profaned those walls, but in vain; the old stone is full of the memories of an undying faith, the altar breathes still of the mystic sacrifice, and the crypts, where English dust has accumulated for ages, impregnate the very air with Catholic immortality.

To the lover of the beautiful, to the student of arts or poetry, these glorious old churches are a treasure of science, a tale of times gone by, a manuscript of stone, wherein he reads the history of architecture, its progress and decay, but to the Catholic alone a scroll of invisible texture is unrolled. The altars, mute and forgotten, bear the names of those who fought the good fight of faith, and who live with Christ; the Gothic columns, rising into the highest regions of space, tell of mysterious longings after immortality; the arches, with their solemn darkness and inclining vaults, bring memory back to the days in which primitive Christians assembled in the low damp vaults of the catacombs: many a window too has been left with its stained glass and myriads of holy figures, and the Catholics, standing in the mirror of those red and golden rays, can see reflected on the pavement the Martyrs and their palms, Holy Virgins following the Lamb, and in the centre of the halo of holiness, the spotless Victim whose blood was shed for many unto the remission of sins. May these silently-cherished glories of the past awaken in many hearts the desire to do likewise; may the bright example of spotless virtue, true to its holy mission, reflect, like the painted window, the sun of faith on our beloved land,

which, like the sun of her national glory, should never have set on Great Britain.

The convent at whose portals we have stopped presented signs of Gothic architecture, but it was more extensive than the cathedrals to which we have alluded. A long range of cloisters enclosed the grounds, which were so vast as to admit of being portioned out into different gardens, of which some were subdivided into beautiful flower-beds, others exhibited a variety of fruit-trees, a long row of shady elms sheltered a part, which was exclusively devoted to the nuns, and the more open space and gravel-walks were trod by the elastic step and tiny feet of the children. When the weather did not permit of out-door exercise, the hoops, skipping-ropes, and other juvenile pastimes were carried to the cloisters, which, being partially walled in, formed an appropriate play-ground; a large glass door gave entrance to a small conservatory, which, receiving the rays of the sun from the south, and through panes of glass, sheltered a great number of choice plants, which often wafted through its open casements sweet perfumes of other climes. In the midst of this verdant shrine rose a statue of the Immaculate Mary, patroness of the school; a small number of pupils, those whose good conduct had placed them peculiarly under the protection of the Mother of God, were allowed to decorate the altar and place thereon the first fruits of the flowers; they generally began their recreation by a short hymn to the Blessed Virgin, and then, with all the gaiety and animation of youth, dispersed to their different plays. These girls were generally chosen among the eldest of the school, their attention to study and good

conduct having merited the blue riband, which is the badge of honour, and a powerful stimulus to exertion for those young unsophisticated minds. There is a greater honour, too—a prize of virtue—which renders the bearer more exclusively the child of Mary, and that is the medal of the Immaculate Conception and Sacred Heart. How high the heart has beat when the beloved medal has been placed on it by an approving superioress, and how pure and undefiled it has often remained through life under the hallowing influence of that symbol. Among those grown-up girls, whose happy faces all bespeak a guileless mind, there is mingled a child, a very young child; she is only nine, although her intellectual features bespeak the thoughts of a riper age; while the children of Mary are forming into a group she has run forwards, and, rising on tip-toe, has, with her two tiny hands, unfastened the latch of the conservatory door, and run on to the foot of Mary's altar, where, falling on her knees, she has stretched out her arms, and in the Italian tongue proffered her salutation: "Buon, giorno, Mamma cara;" then, kissing her fingers, in the childish and expressive fashion of her land, she has moved away to make place for her elder companions. A tall pretty English girl, with laughing blue eyes, very difficult to subdue into seriousness, takes precedence as president, and beckons to the child. The little thing climbs up the steps, and kneels by her side: "The new hymn, Immacolata, can you manage it?"

"Altro!" answered the child, and standing up, with her silvery baby voice, she began the "Bella mia Speranza" she had taught to her companions; the youthful chorus joined, somewhat spoiling the words, but faithfully repeating

the air to the end, and the president, making the sign of the cross, led out the little society into the play-ground. Immacolata was the last to leave the altar, and then, with the same ardour which she had shown in her devotional pursuits, she ran to the little piece of garden which had fallen to her share in the distribution made to the pupils, and was soon lost in the delightful task of weeding and watering her favourite flowers.

She was a sweet child, that little one, lovely in features, and of a cast of countenance so peculiarly foreign, that every one felt attracted to inquire what land she came from. The eyes were innocent and loving, of that dazzling blue peculiar to the Anglo-Saxon race, and which generally suit a fair complexion; but she was a child of the south, as was discernible from her black, luxuriant hair, the dark skin, so clear in its texture, that every change of colour was visible on the countenance of the excitable little Italian, the gestures and animation of her speech, and, above all, her broken English. Her father had, when a boy, felt within him the powerful voice of genius, which called him away from the commercial pursuits to which his family destined him. How many have felt it, and how often has poverty or social difficulties stifled the call! Robert Falconer looked around him; he saw his companions tied to the desk and dragging on a dull matter-of-fact existence, which was to end in competent mediocrity. He felt a loathing for business, a distaste for all labour which was not intellectual. His parents, alarmed at his romantic propensities, put a stop to his education even earlier than they would otherwise have done, and provided a place for him in a firm. The boy's intelligence and strict

integrity secured him the high favour of his employers; but when business time was over, he indulged in long hours of reading and of thought, and became abstracted and silent. One morning his place at the desk remained vacant, and when his parents came at night to inquire what had kept him so long at the office, they were told no one had seen him that day. They returned and searched his room; it showed signs of great disorder and hurried preparations, as for a journey: the boy had disappeared.

"He must have gone to sea," said the father; "'tis strange he never expressed that wish before;" but his sorrowing mother shook her head.

"Her son was not wild," she said; "he had no roving tastes."

There was something more than that: she examined his books; almost all were the histories of great men who had struggled with adversity and conquered. She read, with tearful eyes, the notes Robert had inserted on the margin, or papers he had left in his desk; they all bore traces of a mind at work, of a young ambition panting after glory,—not that which is won by the sword, but that which is the reward of patient exertion. Robert Falconer would fain rise to celebrity in the science of Michael Angelo.

A few days after a letter arrived without a date, but bearing the postmark of a French town. The boy wrote to his mother, imploring her forgiveness.

"You shall hear of me," he said, "when I have made myself a name; until then, my pocket-money, with which you always kindly supplied me, and which I treasured up, suffices for all my present wants. Be not uneasy, and

tell my father I could not submit to follow a profession I hated. God bless you, dearest mother. Your affectionate, though wilful, son,
"ROBERT."

Our young traveller had long cherished the project of studying the fine arts in Italy, and it was wonderful how he had matured his plan in the silence of his own thoughts. He had mastered the first difficulties of French and Italian, so as to facilitate his travelling. He had read so much, that, when he found himself on the classic soil, he felt at home. He made straight for Florence, and there went round to the studios of the different artists, asking for employment. All stared at his innocent request: some did not understand him; some smiled and turned away. His heart felt sick; he began to think he had hoped too much; his little purse was nearly empty. What was he to do, alone, and in a foreign land?

Evening came on, the Ave Maria of the *ventiquattro* tolled from the Duomo; excitement had till then kept him up; but now he felt houseless, and a wanderer: he thought of his mother, and wept. He was aroused by an old beggar-woman asking for charity. The boy had scarcely any money remaining; but affliction renders the heart alive to the sorrows of others. He took out of his pocket a small silver piece and gave it.

"Dio la benedica!" exclaimed the old woman, overjoyed, "che lei è buono quanto è bello." Then seeing his beautiful face covered with tears: "Cosa ha, signorino?"* and endeavoured to comfort him.

* "God bless you." "For you are as good as you're handsome." "What is the matter?"

"Oh! I am poor," said the boy, sobbing; "I am poor, and seeking for work."

The old woman gazed at him as one bewildered. "What work," she asked, "a signorino like you?"

"Oh, if I could get into a sculptor's; but they won't take me—no one knows me."

The old woman raised her hands to heaven. "Hope in the Madonna," she said, "and follow me."

The boy dried his tears and obeyed. She hobbled on, stopping from time to time to tell him of a very good signorina,—a real angel, to whose charity she owed her entire support. "Her father is a great sculptor," she added, "and possibly he might employ you. I will go and call for the signorina; she would do anything for my sake. Now look, signore; had you spurned me, as many do, I should never have known what you wished for, and——but here we are," she said, stopping at an iron gate in the Sondacci Sto. Spirito, which showed within a small courtyard, where many blocks of marble, newly arrived, had been laid. She raised her withered hand to the bell; a civil-looking servant-man answered to the call, and on the woman mentioning her object, "But, my good Teresa," replied the domestic, "how can I disturb the young lady at this hour? Dinner is over, and she is in the drawing-room, reading to her father."

"Tell her," said the beggar—"tell her it is I who am here, with a message to deliver to her, and the Madonna will bless her if she will only come down."

"I will try," said the servant.

He returned with orders to introduce Teresa into the ante-chamber, where a young girl, of

gentle manners and intelligent features, came soon after, laughing merrily at the idea of receiving such a visitor; but she stopped suddenly, and looked surprised at the sight of Robert, who had followed the beggar-woman. Teresa told her errand in a few eloquent words; the young lady reflected, withdrew, and was heard in the adjoining room speaking to her father in a low voice. She then appeared at the door, beckoned to the English boy, who found himself in a handsome drawing-room furnished in the Italian style of the middle ages, busts and small groups of marble ornamenting the old-fashioned consoles.

The casement was still open, night not having yet set in, and, sitting before it was a man yet in the prime of life, although he looked sickly, and had the appearance of premature old age, brought on by much exertion and fatigue; his countenance was benevolent, and his high forehead spoke of well-developed genius; an open book lay before him on a low stool his daughter had just left; she stood by his side and introduced the English boy. Robert bowed, and was silent.

"My dear boy," said the sculptor, "can you tell me something about yourself?"

The young traveller, expressing himself with great difficulty, said, "He had travelled all the way from England, and had been in Florence since morning."

"Parents' permission?" asked the Florentine, using simple words in order to render Italian intelligible to the youth's unpractised ear. Robert hung down his head. "Wrong, wrong," said the sculptor, understanding the mute reply; "had you done anything wrong before?"

"No," said the boy, turning scarlet, and his

eyes flashing fire; "I want to work as you have done, because I feel within me that I can. Oh! give me work and save me from poverty and starvation."

The words were said in English, for the boy's vehemence could not find vent in Italian, but the expression which accompanied them was not to be mistaken; the good man was touched, he turned to his daughter,—

"What say you, Bianca?"

"Padre mio, take him, and leave him not in the streets; think of his mother at home."

"Approach, young man," resumed the artist, "your face is one of those that knows not falsehood; will you be grateful and good if I take care of you."

The young Englishman stood up straight, and simply answered: "I promise."

The sculptor held out his hand, which the boy took, proud and happy, and then turning to the young lady, bowed very low.

"Give orders to Giovanni to take charge of him, Bianca, and let him have supper and a bed, for he looks cold and hungry; go, my boy, try to learn Italian quickly, and we will make something of you."

The following morning found Robert in his patron's studio, his radiant countenance showing that the artist's contact had awakened in him the long-suppressed flame. When a few days had elapsed, and when, with that facility so natural to youth, he had learnt much of the Italian idiom; when he told of his ardent longings after the art, of his trials, his journey, his wish to learn, the excellent man rejoiced that he had hearkened to the first instinct of benevolence, and in doing a

good deed, opened the career he so much loved to an aspiring genius; but he told the boy he would not keep him without his parents' knowledge, and that he must write and tell them of his new position.

"Let me wait a little longer," said the boy; "let me wait till I can say I have learnt something."

Time went on, and the young student, true to his early call, rose high in his art, and was enabled to show at the Exhibition of Fine Arts some of his workmanship, which obtained for him one of the inferior prizes; but it was a prize, the one he had lived and longed for. He sent to his parents the news of his first triumph. Time went on; years passed away; the temples which beat high under the laurels of fame lost the luxuriant curl of the boyish hair, and the child grew into manhood. Robert had proved the most successful of his master's pupils, and at twenty-five was the pride of his heart; but the early enthusiasm which had torn him away from his friends and country had done its work, it had brought out his talents and shown him the road to fortune; the fever of glory had left him, he began to think of home, and wished to return to England; there was another motive too, an honourable one, which influenced his resolution. It was impossible for an artist not to have admired the growing beauty of Bianca, impossible for a grateful heart not to remember that he owed his present position to her intercession on that eventful night which had decided his fate. Robert had silently loved Bianca, and his love, always respectful and unknown, had assumed a holy and mysterious feeling; he looked up to her and worshipped her, for she was beautiful, innocent and pure.

He opened his mind to his master, and acquainted him with his wish of returning to England. "I fear I appear ungrateful to you, my dear master," he added, "but I cannot explain myself entirely."

"Indeed, dear pupil, I had founded many hopes on you. I had thought you would take up my studio."

"My beloved master, never could my ambition have looked so high."

"And I had formed another dream, and that, I am surprised to see does not enter your head, either."

Robert awaited a further explanation.

"Yes, at your age, I thought of something beyond the art, and dearer to me still; I was not so sober as you are, but your English nature is not thawed yet, I suppose," and the old man looked disappointed.

Robert coloured deeply.

"I am afraid of misunderstanding you, dear master."

"No, Falconer, speak to me openly, as is your wont, I am sure our thoughts have met on the same subject; tell me if your affection for my daughter is not something more than gratitude?"

"Oh! my dear good master, I love her as she loves her Madonna."

"Why then all this disguising?"

"Sir! could the boy who owes all to your generosity presume to think of the daughter of his patron? Oh! no, signore; I promised you I would be grateful, and I have kept my word."

"No, my dear Falconer, for it would have been a poor reward to me, had you broken my daughter's heart, and that was what you were very

near doing, signore! Bianca has loved you all her life, and all the suitors I have presented her have met with a decided refusal, so I advise you to try and win her, with my free consent, and the sooner the better."

So saying, he rung the bell, and called for his daughter.

She came with her usual alacrity; but on seeing the young sculptor standing before her father, evidently much moved, she hesitated.

"Come hither, pretty one," said he. "Dost thou permit me," and he took her hand, "to dispose of this?"

She did not answer, but hid her face on his shoulder.

"Thou wilt not say no, this time?"

She made no sign of reluctance, and the pretty little hand was placed in that of the young Englishman, and they were affianced.

Shortly after, their marriage was solemnized, in the Catholic form, and likewise in the Protestant, for Falconer had remained true to the principles of his boyhood, and nothing could induce him to swerve from his creed. The stipulation, though, always exacted in such cases by the Catholic church, was made, the children must be brought up in the mother's faith.

Robert alleged that the boys ought to be of his persuasion.

Bianca gently and earnestly insisted, and Robert gave up, promising that all should be baptised Catholics.

Perhaps, though he had intended that the first sacrament being conferred, he would assume to himself the religious education of his boys; perhaps the gentle Bianca had presumed too much

"Grazie, you one side, me the other."

"How very prettily you set your flowers, my dear, and how very many you have."

"Oh, they are not pretty, they are not Italian; but I have written to my mamma to send me some seeds."

"And will they grow here, do you think?"

"If they can only see the sun they will be very happy, and I too."

"Well, there is the conservatory; that is comfortable, is it not?"

"Oh, yes: I will ask leave."

A bell rung, that which apprizes the girls that they can only enjoy five minutes' more recreation; the news was received by a renewed activity in the play-ground, while the little Italian put away her garden tools, washed her hands, and, at the appointed signal, took her place in the juvenile procession which marched back two by two into the school-room.

CHAPTER II.

It was a Twelfth Night, and a children's party had assembled to keep the pleasant *fête* : a profusion of white dresses, and blue and pink sashes, crowded the drawing-room of Mrs. O'Sullivan's cottage, situated at the entrance of a village a few miles from ——. Little boys and little girls, of whom the oldest were only twelve, composed a juvenile ball, not very methodically conducted, but where every face looked bright and happy ; a case rarely to be met with in grown-up people's balls. It was a pleasant sight for the mothers and aunts to look upon, and it was difficult to say which part of the company enjoyed it the most. Divers plays had been provided for the general amusement ; and long ere the tiny feet had got tired of keeping pace to the music, the doors of the supper-room were thrown open, and the little court convoked to the feast, which was to confer temporary royalty on a king and queen. Ellen O'Sullivan, the daughter of the lady of the house, took her place at the head of the table ; she was just twelve, and looked even younger, so innocent and artless was her childish face ; she had done the honours of the evening without taking much part in its pastimes ; although naturally gay, she was thoughtful on this occasion, for this party was a farewell ; to her, it was a leave-taking from her friends preparatory to her going to school, and at the same time Mrs. O'Sullivan wished to sympathize with one of her nearest neighbours and

friends, whose little boy was going to sea. George Irvington had been a favourite with the family since a child; he had been Ellen's constant playmate, and as he sat at the supper-table, full of fun and buoyant spirits, it was impossible not to feel for the little fellow, so young that he still required a mother's care, and who, in a few days, would commence his life on the high seas. Animated and even too noisy as had been the little voices during the evening at supper, a universal hush ensued when Mrs. O'Sullivan proceeded to cut the important cake, and each guest's heart beat high as he stretched out his or her covetous hand, and drew a chance for royalty. A breathless silence ensued; some of the smaller members ate up their cake very fast, others laid their share on their plate and examined it carefully; the suspense was long and almost painful.

"Hallo!" cried George, at last—"hurrah for me! I'm king!" and he stood up, holding his glass in one hand and the momentous bean in the other. "I've been nearly choked—give me three cheers." And the whole court rose—there was no canvassing there—and gave the little hero a hearty cheer. He waved his hand. "Stop! wait for the other two till I have chosen my queen;" and he proceeded to the other end of the room, where servants held on cushions the pasteboard crowns, covered in gold paper, little sceptres to match, and two cloaks trimmed with many-coloured ribbons, the supposed insignia of royalty. George stooped, received on his brow the motley diadem, then, taking from the servant's hand the other cushion, he walked solemnly up to the head of the table, and laid it at Ellen's feet. A simultaneous burst of applause approved of the happy choice, and

many hands offered to crown Ellen and pin on her cloak; the monarchs then walked hand in hand to the two armchairs prepared for their enthronement; and there was much joy, many toasts, and a royal decree was passed and cheerfully adopted, consisting in prolonging for an hour beyond the appointed time the pleasures of the evening. The king and queen, however, did not join the plays again; children as they were, they felt they had both reached an important epoch in their lives: in a few days Ellen was to enter the convent of the Sacred Heart, preparatory to her first communion, and George was to begin his sailor's life.

"What nice plays we have often had together, George, do you remember?"

"Oh yes, Ellen; and I dare say I shall think of them often, when I'm far away."

"And wish for them again, perhaps?"

"Oh no; I'm going to be a man in earnest."

"Poor George! I'm afraid you'll find that very difficult."

"No, that I won't. I mean to have some fun, but I won't get into scrapes, you shall see; you'll soon hear of my being a clever fellow. I mean to distinguish myself; and when I'm a lieutenant I mean to come back and ask Ellen to be my little wife."

"Hush, George; don't be silly."

"Haven't I told you the same thing all my life; you never said hush to me before, and you shan't when I am a man; promise me you won't."

"Be quiet, George, do; mamma will be displeased if you talk nonsense."

"Nonsense, indeed! as if I don't know better;

true, she said ; she would not believe it, would not put on the mourning provided for her ; she must go home to her mother . . . she must and would. She fell into hysterics, and the superioress, alarmed, sent for the mistress of Immacolata's class, who exerted all her influence to soothe and comfort her. It was not till evening that the child consented to put on her black frock ; then her mistress gently took her by the hand through the garden, where her companions averted their gaze from her in sympathetic sorrow, and led her by the hand to the Blessed Virgin's altar. The nun knelt and prayed with her ; then, when she saw her more calm, " I will leave you, my beloved child," she said, " to her who is your only Mother now ; at the foot of this altar read your fond parent's last words ; you may not perhaps understand them all now, for you are very young ; but treasure them up in your heart, that the seed sown by her pious hand may produce a hundredfold by the grace of God."

So saying, she kissed her on the forehead and left the conservatory, closing the door. The child sat down on the steps, for she was weary of her first long day of sorrow ; she covered her face with her tiny hands, but she had wept so much that her eyes were red and dry ; an evening breeze came through the half-open casement, and the flowers' perfume seemed to keep her sweet company ; she remembered they had been her mother's friends, and she loved them ; she drew the letter from the folds of her little dress, kissed it fondly, then broke the seal :—

" When you read these lines," it said, " my only child, the heart that has so much loved you will beat no more ; I say not it will be in

God's holy presence, for I dare not hope to gaze so soon on the face of Jesus and of His holy Mother; but if I have to expiate in the next life my failings in this, remember, my girl, that your prayers and virtuous life can atone for me, and hasten my entrance into happy eternity. Thus we shall be less parted in death than we were in life, and the daughter's duties, which your loving heart would fain have fulfilled towards me in life, you will pay to me henceforth in applying to me the fruits of our Saviour's passion and blood. Remain faithful to the principles of our holy Catholic faith: let no persuasion, no authority, no motive, however specious, ever induce you to swerve from the promises you made to Jesus on the baptismal font. My child, you were given to me after much sorrow, and I would fain have followed the custom of our land, and consecrated you to Mary's colours, but I could not; for your father's faith was not mine; I then gave you her name. I implored her to watch over your soul, that it might never lose the immaculate robe of innocence. Years will pass over your head, a time will come when your impetuous nature will reveal itself, and you will find it more difficult than you suppose to remain faithful to Jesus and Mary; then, oh! my child, I implore you, remember your name, and choose rather to die than cease to be immaculate. Daughter, I have alluded to my greatest grief; the only one I carry away with me from this life, where I have suffered much; I leave your father a Protestant: perhaps I was not good enough to obtain the grace of his conversion, for which I so ardently prayed; perhaps Almighty God punished me for having loved my husband so much that I married him at the

risk of losing my faith; it is reserved for you, my child, to fulfil the mission which I vainly thought would prove easy to me. I leave you this task as a sacred inheritance; accept it, and let it be the most cherished wish of your heart. You have asked me for flowers, dear child, I have culled some seeds of *gaggià* from the tree which grows over my dear father's resting-place, and where I shall soon be laid by his side; that tree was transplanted from the courtyard in our old house, where I had planted it myself, and the branches thereof had begun to flower at my bedroom window. If it can grow in England, the perfume of its flowers will speak to you of your mother's grave."

More precious advice concluded the dying letter, words too high for the child's intelligence to reach, but which served her in after-years. She opened the little box of seeds, which had been given her with the letter, chose out some thick pods, and, taking a hoe, which was ranged with other garden tools among the plants, she dug in a small empty space, under a window which opened to the south, in the exterior convent wall, and admitted the rays of the sun to the hothouse plants. She then knelt down, wept, and some of her tears rolled down on the little plantation; she kissed the ground, which to her bore the memory of that distant grave she could not see; she was still stooping and weeping most piteously, when a rough but kind voice called her up from the ground; it was the old gardener of the convent, with whom the little girl was a special favourite. "Paul, oh, is it you, Paul? I was just wishing for you."

"Bless your little soul, miss; it's very good of you to think of a useless body like myself. I'm sore distressed, miss, to see you in trouble."

"Oh, I am, Paul, very unhappy, you see," and she touched her black frock; "my dear, beautiful mamma."

"I'm very sorry to hear it, miss; pity, poor thing, she should have lived in foreign parts; that's not good for delicate ones, you see, miss. All those that go there never come back."

"Oh, but she was not English, Paul; she died in her own country, and that I'm sure was a comfort to her. Now look, do you see what I've been sowing here? seeds which *she* sent me, taken from the tree under which she rests now . . ."

And here the child's sobs broke forth again.

"I see, miss," said the old man, passing the back of his rough hand on his eyes; "I'll take care of them for you, and, I give you my word, they'll thrive, if I'm good for anything in this world."

"Thank you, dear, good Paul; you have never seen this shrub; it is a *gaggià* tree."

"God bless your pretty names; it's too much for a worn-out old brain like mine to learn 'em; can't call any of them foreign things proper no more than yourself, miss."

"Well, but, Paul, you must know it from the other plants."

"So I will and shall, miss; old Paul has his own name for you; *the convent flower*, miss, he makes bold to call you, and we'll give the same name to this here foreign one, with our best wishes it may grow beautiful as yourself; and here comes your mistress, seeking for you, miss, and try and take comfort, for you've many friends in this here place."

"I know it, Paul; and you, too, are very good to me."

"Oh! I'm your humble servant, miss, nothing else."

"Thank you, Paul; good-bye;" and she placed her little white hand on his rough arm, and went out to meet her mistress, to whom she related how the old man's comfort had tempered her grief.

"And now, my dear child, come and join your companions, who are all inquiring for you."

"Please, dear madam, not to-day."

"My love, it is right and dutiful of you to feel the loss you have sustained, but I do not wish to leave you alone."

"May Ellen O'Sullivan come to me, madam?"

"Certainly, my dear," and the nun beckoned to the group of children composing the second division, from which a young girl came forward, with a quick, but quiet step, and embraced the little Italian with great feeling.

"Dear Immacolata," she said, "I was wishing so much to come to you."

"Take charge of her, Ellen," said the mistress; "to your well-known good conduct I grant the unusual permission of remaining alone with your companion; there are few girls more worthy of implicit trust than you are, dear Ellen; Immacolata, confide in your friend, you could never have chosen a better."

Ellen gratefully kissed the hand of her mistress, and devoted all that evening to her companion; the warm-hearted Irish girl had contracted a deep attachment for the little girl who had welcomed her with sympathy at her first entrance into school; she was two years older than her friend, but far inferior to her in talent. In a less generous mind, the feeling of Immacolata's

superiority would have proved an obstacle to affection; but Ellen was of a noble, self-denying nature, her natural unobtrusiveness rendered her blind to her own abilities, and she was modest to a fault. As they grew up, it was remarked that Immacolata's manners were the most fascinating, but Ellen pleased the longest; all her companions recognized in Immacolata a kind of childish authority, and looked up to her, but every one *loved* Ellen, and wished to have her as a friend: this difference in their characters became more marked in later years, and influenced their different paths through life.

CHAPTER IV.

THE *fête* of Corpus Domini was at hand, and its approach hailed by the pupils of the convent with more than ordinary interest. The piety and precocious intelligence of the little Italian had obtained for her the favour of being admitted to her first communion at the early age of eleven. Ellen, who was thirteen, and among the communicants of that year, was overjoyed at the good news that Immacolata was to be her companion at the Altar. An innocent spirit of rivalry arose among the young aspirants; all were innocent and good, all strove to improve, but Immacolata and her Irish friend were always at the head of the list of good conduct and diligence. Happy are the souls of whom Jesus has been the first love, and in whose hearts the seed sown by the divine hand has known no thorns to hinder its happy growth!

Immacolata's precocious mind seemed to dawn into futurity; hers was not, like most children's, a preparation, innocent in its very childishness, and unable to comprehend the great object in view; she had early learnt the mystery of prayer; she had in her infancy knelt and adored by her mother's side a God concealed in the Holy Eucharist, and when Bianca returned from the Holy Altar with eyes cast down, and closed on the world's dreams, with the bright radiance of another mystical life on her pure forehead, the child had bowed in awe and love, and crept nearer,

in order to breathe the atmosphere of holiness in which she saw the communicant absorbed. And now that she had been judged worthy of partaking of the bread of Angels, she felt that, like the Apostle, she had put away the things of childhood; she could have chosen to be dissolved and die with Christ; she understood the martyrs' holy thirst for suffering, and if that were not conceded to her youthful longings, she felt she had found the pearl of great price, which she would never, never cast away. Much of her pious thoughts she disclosed to her young companions, for all were anxious to help each other in the solemn preparation, but Ellen was her confidant above all others.

Together the young girls passed their spiritual retreat; together saw the day dawn which was to unite them to their blessed Lord. Immacolata quitted the black frock she had worn since her mother's death, and put on the white dress and veil provided for her by her mistresses; she had no parents, and many things were wanting to complete her toilette; but when they were leaving the dormitory, Ellen presented her with a white prayer-book, and crown of white roses similar to her own. Immacolata pressed her hand in silence, for not a word was to pass their lips before the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. They walked through the garden, the conservatory doors were open, the children of Mary made a kneeling salutation before their favourite altar; a passage led from that to the chapel, and there was Paul, the old gardener, dressed in Sunday clothes; he waited for all the young ladies to pass, and then stopped Immacolata, holding out to her a tiny nosegay of small yellow flowers.

"Old Paul has kept his word, miss ; the convent flower has thrived."

"I cannot speak now," she said, "but I am so glad, so glad."

She pressed the little yellow tufts, and placed them within the folds of her dress, on the heart where Jesus was so soon to repose ; they were to her messengers from her mother, these flowers, and as such they spoke of Heaven, of her father, and her native land ; she passed on, weeping happy tears.

The chapel was decorated with a profusion of flowers and lights ; the young girls took their places, and shortly after, the organ pealed its solemn notes, and a chorus of youthful voices, singing, "Blessed is he who cometh in the name of the Lord," announced the entrance of him who was to preside over the day's solemnity, His Eminence Cardinal Wiseman, Archbishop of Westminster.

He came, and all the young heads bowed under the hand that blessed them ; he began the Mass, and all listened with tearful emotion to the low and solemn words of the Holy Sacrifice, so familiar to the Catholic ear, but which, at times, seem to bear a character of peculiar import : there are times when the mind is so impressed, that the tenour of a whole life has been derived from that hour of prayer, and the graces there received have sufficed for a long expiation. The young communicants felt that the Holy Victim then offering was almost exclusively theirs ; that Jesus, for the first time, descended on the altar for them. When the Elevation was over, and the voice they so much loved spoke to them in the name of Christ, what wonder that *his* words penetrated them with an

undying wish to live for God ; what wonder that *he*, whose example was so bright, should have inspired them with a vivid faith and unalterable love ? “ *Sursum corda !* ” said the prelate, terminating his short allocution, and calling down on them the blessing of the Lamb of God, and each young girl took unto herself in her own heart that motto for life : “ *Sursum corda !* ” One and all approached, collected and impressed ; Immacolata was as calm as the rest ; but the cardinal, in administering to her the Sacred Host, saw in that radiant face and upturned eyes an impression of the Holy Spirit that worked within, and whose seal was stamped on her youthful brow. The thanksgiving was fervent and long ; the young communicants assembled in the school-room, where the nuns and all their companions came to wish them joy ; then, and not till then, did Immacolata turn to her friend, and, embracing her fondly, gave an outpouring to her feelings :—

“ Did you ask for much ? ” inquired Ellen.

“ No ! I prayed, of course, for all I love, and for you ; but I only implored two great graces.”

“ Tell them to me.”

“ My prayer must remain a secret, Ellen ; I prayed for my father’s conversion, and that I may be worthy to become a spouse of Christ.”

“ Dear Immacolata, we ought only to wish to do God’s will.”

“ Oh, but my prayer cannot displease our blessed Lord, I am sure.”

The bell summoned them to breakfast, and the day was spent in devotional exercises and quiet recreation. Immacolata was often sought for in the course of the day, and as often was she found

alone in the chapel, kneeling at the railing where in the morning she had received her God. Was it a continuation of the Holy Communion the fervent child sought there? was it strength against her own heart, of which she knew the ardour but not yet the weakness? In her guileless inexperience, the innocent girl thought that the path of duty would continue for her as easy through life as it had been till then; she knew of nothing outside the convent walls, and wished for nought beyond; that her life might pass there, exhaling the perfume of her virtue for God alone, that she might die unknown to the world, a convent flower. Was such a wish selfish? To us it may seem so, who know naught of the secret workings of the heart touched by a mighty love—to us, who have only admired woman in her holy character of wife and mother, and who consider her life useless, if not employed in that special mission; but there are in all things mysteries which a profane hand may not unveil. Like the secret spring of a master-work—like the foundation-stone to a grand edifice—like the vital spark which remains unextinguished, nourishing a secret flame. The virtue of immolation is to Catholicism its soul, its foundation, and its hope. From the Lamb that was slain, and whose wounds still speak for us before the Almighty Throne, to the last drop of blood shed for our holy religion, and the most imperceptible sigh offered up in union with those merits, the Catholic must *offer* to participate in that eternal sacrifice which knows neither sunrise nor sunset.

Glorious privilege! distinctive mark of the true faith! the Calvary of expiation is still the Calvary that saves; the altar on which the blood of Christ

still flows ; has remained in the Church for the Christian to come to, and die daily. If, in some hearts, the life-giving lesson has sunk deeper than in ours, shall we blame them ? Let us rather rejoice, and pray that in the Sanctuary of God pure souls may never be wanting to raise their spotless hands, and offer up a living sacrifice between us and God's wrath.

It was evening, and a solemn benediction had closed the holy ceremonies of the day ; the chapel still retained the perfume of incense, Immacolata was still absorbed in prayer, when Ellen came by her side, touched her gently, and asked her to go out. When both were in the garden, " See," she said, " dear mamma brought me two letters,* which I did not wish to read to-day, for fear of distracting my mind ; I am going to open them now, and I think you will like to hear them." It was a long and affectionate letter from George Irvington to his little friend, full of the anecdotes of his new life, of the wonders he had seen, and countries he had visited. Ellen was innocently delighted ; but, with an instinctive delicacy which she hardly understood herself, she suppressed the endearing appellations she had received from her companion since childhood. " And now," said Ellen, when she had concluded, " Almighty God has given me to-day all the happiness I could wish for ; from this morning at the altar, not a relation, not a friend has forgotten to give me a mark of affection."

Immacolata's eyes filled with tears.

* The first, from her brother, was short, though kind. He was on active military service, and had snatched a leisure moment to write to her.

"Forgive me, Immacolata, I am selfish ; I had forgotten how lonely you must feel to-day."

"No, dear Ellen, you never forget what is kind and good. Mine was a regret ; but it is past. I thought of my father."

"Dear friend, that prayer must be pleasing to God, and it will be heard."

"I hope—oh yes, I hope so, one day !"

The last bell of the day announced the hour for withdrawing to the dormitory, and the young girls ascended the steps leading thither in silence.

CHAPTER V.

YEAR succeeded to year, bringing no change in the sweet monotony of the happy girlish lives which flowed on within the walls of the *Sacré Cœur*. Immacolata had grown beautiful, without a mirror having ever told her the pleasing tale. Her features had assumed the oval cast of womanhood, and her countenance seemed to have borrowed from her peaceful life an expression of calm and gentleness; but, to an attentive observer, the brow so often lit up with enthusiasm, the eyes so often flashing with a fire that came from within, bespoke the child of genius and of song. Immacolata had in her nature the poetry of her land; her compositions bespoke an unrivalled talent, and a depth of feeling which made her mistresses fear for the storms which that young heart would have to encounter hereafter. Her piety seemed fervent, perhaps more enthusiastic than solid; but who can tell by what links it pleases the Almighty to draw us unto Him? Does not the Maker of the instrument know best what chords to touch? whether it be the intellect that bows down in awe, or the heart that thrills to His love—what matter, so that all vibrate to His greater glory!

Immacolata's father had returned to England, and had called his child to be the companion of his hearth, which had so long remained desolate. The aged artist looked upon the fair face of his daughter, and rejoiced to find her beautiful as a

dream. The girl lingered yet a few days on the threshold of the house which had been to her the home of her childhood, where she had learned to prepare for the battle of life. A week was to elapse before the distribution of prizes, which crowned the year of study; and Mr. Falconer smiled as his daughter recounted to him the ceremonies of the day, and consented to wait till then. Immacolata spent her last school-days in solitude and prayer, relieved by long and affectionate conversations with her mistresses and her young friends. Her flowers, too, were not forgotten: the *gaggia*, which her tiny hands had planted, had grown into a moderate-sized tree, and each returning autumn the flowerets wafted to the fond girl the perfumed memories of her sunny land. A southern and sheltered aspect favoured the shrub; it was delicate, and its mimosa-like leaves trembled at the first breath of wind; but still it grew hardy and flowered. Immacolata's hands alone culled its flowers; it was her mother's dying present, she said, and the gardener and all the convent's inmates had alike respected the young girl's feelings. "My poor tree," she said, as, on the morning of her leaving school, she stole down into the garden, attired in her white dress, and ready for the approaching ceremony, "my poor tree, you will yield me no flowers this year. I must bid you good-bye."

She clasped her arms round it and bent her head, until approaching footsteps made her look up. It was a very young nun, one who had lately joined the community, and whom Immacolata had known as a pupil.

"Dear Immacolata," said she, "I sought the dormitory, where I hoped to embrace you once

more and bid you good-bye. Your mistress told me you were in the garden, and here I find you all in tears."

"Edith, I was just wishing to see you. You know how dear this spot is to me, hallowed in association with my mother's grave."

"I know it, dear, and understand your regrets."

"Edith, I confide to you my tree, because you have loved me long. Cull the flowers as you have seen me do, and let them always be sent to me."

"I accept the trust, Immacolata; and now, our Holy Mother guide you."

"Ask her, Edith, ask her soon to bring me home."

"Home! dear girl, you are going there."

"Oh no," she replied; "there is no home for me beyond these walls. Here I have known happiness,—I have found peace."

"Bear it away with you in your heart, dear child."

"Oh, no! I cannot always; it beats too high! Each plant has its soil: the convent flower is mine. Were my gaggià-tree transplanted, it would die; and I, I fear, shall suffer much."

"Look up, my sweet one; your tree has reached the wall, and some of its branches look over: it would fain be on the other side. Is not that your case?"

Immacolata looked up and smiled; but she steadily repeated "No!"

"Beware of your enthusiastic nature. Remember the duties you have to perform in your new home, and look not beyond."

Thus saying, she kissed her on the forehead, and both went to the Blessed Virgin's altar, where they had so often knelt in prayer. The glass

doors of the conservatory had been removed, and blue silk trappings decorated the walls where the pupils were to assemble and receive their crowns from the hands of His Eminence Cardinal Wiseman.

A quarter of an hour had yet to elapse before the assembling of the guests. Immacolata, concealed behind the drapery, prayed fervently at the shrine where she had knelt from childhood. She prayed that she might fulfil her duties in the world, and accomplish the mission left to her by her mother; for herself, she asked nothing, save that, like her holy patroness, her joys might be those of a Virgin Bride, that she might know no nuptials but those of the Immaculate Lamb.

The convent bells pealed, music began to play; the sound of a multitude of little feet were heard thronging the aisle of the cloister; Immacolata rose, and stood among her companions. Her eye ran for one instant over the assembled parents, rested on her father, and then resumed its quiet, modest gravity. Ellen stood by her side; together the friends had walked from their childhood, and on the eve of being separated, they were rivals, yet friends in the last triumph; their names were proclaimed together for the prize of good conduct; both descended, and kneeling before his Eminence, received from his hand the crown of white roses, fit type of the beautiful prize; both knelt, and kissed the Apostolic ring, and Immacolata, raising her eyes to the benevolent countenance, saw him who had taught her young heart its first "Sursum Corda," and whose approving look seemed to repeat to her that battleword of life! Again and again the fair Italian was proclaimed first in all branches of education; again and again she trod

the space left open between the guests, and brought the crowns to her father, who placed them on her brow, almost as happy as herself; and when the last youthful chorus announced the joys of the day over, he pressed his long-lost treasure to his heart, and called her by her mother's name: "Is there no pleasure I can confer on my child, who promises me so much, no reward I can add to all these;" and he laughingly put together the handsomely-bound volumes which she had laid on a chair during his embrace.

"Papa, I want you to know Ellen?"

"And who may she be? the Grecian Princess Helen, is a favourite model with me."

"Dear Father, she is an Irish girl, and my very best friend; I have often spent my solitary holidays at her house, and it is very painful to me now to bid her good-bye."

"Let me see her, above all things."

"Come to the drawing-room then;" and she led the way to the simply-furnished convent parlour, where Ellen was preparing to go away with her parents; at the sight of her friend, she rushed forward to embrace her. Immacolata took her hand, and beckoned to her father. "Here she is, papa; here is dear Ellen;" and then bowing gracefully to Mr. and Mrs. O'Sullivan, "Excuse me," she said, "for not introducing papa first to you; Ellen has been to me a sister, and as such I wished my dear Father to know her."

"I congratulate you, sir," said Mr. O'Sullivan, cordially offering his hand, "on your return home, and on your finding such a pretty daughter to welcome you."

"I thank you, sir, from my heart, and particularly for your kindness to my girl; cir-

cumstances have parted me from her long, but, thank God, that is quite at an end, and I rejoice that she has found such good friends in my absence."

"For my part," interposed Mrs. O'Sullivan, "I am selfishly disappointed; I had hoped my young favourite would have shared our home during the ensuing holidays, as heretofore."

"But," said her husband, "if Mr. Falconer has no better engagement, he will not reject our welcome, and come down to our little place, which is only a few miles from this."

"I know not how to express my thanks; I have for the present no fixed place of residence, and must choose a home."

"Then do, sir, join our party; there are some very pretty country places to be sold or let in our neighbourhood, perhaps one of them might strike your fancy; what says Imma?"

"Too much happiness, sir, to live near Ellen."

"Dear papa, you will so like Ivy Cottage, and next door to it lives Mrs. Irvington, such a dear lady, whom I used to meet at Mr. O'Sullivan's, and like very much."

"My dear child will have to introduce me to many friends; I feel as if I knew them already."

All was soon arranged, and the party proceeded to the station. Immacolata and her friend looked back more than once in the direction of the Old Abbey: the spring of their lives closed there, both were verging on womanhood, and a new season of life dawned on them. Yet their regrets had little of sadness; youth hearkens unwillingly to any language but that of hope, and the unexpected pleasure of spending the holidays together concentrated all the thoughts of the

young friends. All descended at Ivy Cottage, and the spare bedroom, which Immacolata had often occupied, having been allotted to Mr. Falconer, a small bed was fitted up in Ellen's room for her friend; their joy was complete, and when they retired to rest, it was long before either of them could compose herself to sleep. A few days elapsed, during which Immacolata and her father remained the welcome guests at Ivy Cottage; when, to the general satisfaction, Mr. Falconer declared himself extremely pleased with the vicinity, and decided upon purchasing a house and garden which rose on a little hill, at a short distance from Mr. O'Sullivan's residence. Immacolata was enchanted; Ellen, quietly delighted; the two gentlemen walked over one morning after breakfast, and concluded the bargain. The next day Mr. Falconer and his daughter took possession of their new abode, and their final settling was celebrated by a dinner party, to which were invited the O'Sullivan's, friends and immediate neighbours. For the first time Immacolata presided at her father's dinner-table, and did so with an easy bearing surprising in a girl who had only left school a few days. Many flattering remarks were passed on her, and congratulations on her beautiful friend were addressed to Ellen, who, with the simple warm-heartedness which knew no envy, replied: "Oh! you do not know her: her mind is better still than her face; she was the convent flower. At the end of dinner, a toast was drunk to Mr. Falconer's happy return, and a warm welcome to the new inhabitants of Laburnum Hill; may their stay be long among us, was the general wish. Ellen had spoken little during dinner; but when her father produced a letter, her

eyes glistened with the expression of a deep-seated joy. Being in the midst of friends, he said, "I take the liberty of announcing a happy event, to which my family has long looked forward; my son, Major O'Sullivan, is on his way home."

"Already a major! is it possible?" was echoed by all the guests at once; and there was a shaking of hands all round the table, and a universal wishing of joy.

Mr. Falconer filled his glass, the example was followed by all present: "Here's to his health," he exclaimed; "and now let us hear more about him: is that letter from your son, O'Sullivan?"

"It is, and the sight of it has made my wife and myself ten years younger. I shouldn't say it, but it is pleasant to have one's son distinguish himself."

"Mr. O'Sullivan," interposed Mrs. Irvington, "I think I may, as an old friend, claim the privilege of hearing your son James's letter, and I am sure I only interpret the general wish in asking you to read it aloud."

"Certainly, certainly," was the exclamation of all present: and the proud and happy father read it with ill-concealed emotion:—

"Dear father, dear mother, sweet Ellen,—To the kindness of an English Sister of Charity, I am indebted for the pleasure of writing to you; for I am laid up, and my right arm disabled. Had I fallen in the last fight, another letter would have reached you, the farewell of your soldier boy, who penned you a few lines ere he left his tent for the battle-field; but Providence has otherwise decreed. The newspapers will speak enough of the taking of the Redan, and no one man can tell the history of a combat; life,

death, and victory are all comprised for him in the narrow space marked out by the word of command. Mine was a glorious task, a fatal one it had nearly proved ; but, at that hour perhaps, my fond mother and angel sister prayed for the absent one, and I felt myself a hero. Part of our regiment advanced to the attack, and whether contradictory order had been given, or that our excitement had hurried us on too wildly, I know not, but our commanding officer, on looking back, perceived that a wide empty space stretched between us and the troops ; a few seconds more and we would be cut off from all help. A despatch must be carried to headquarters, said the colonel. I was sufficiently near to hear him : he caught my glance ; I suppose it showed my longing ardour for the mission, for a few seconds after he held out to me the despatch, and briefly ordered me to carry it. I turned my horse's head, and forgot all else ; for had any thought of home crossed my mind, I had been unnerved. Flying missiles rained on that empty space, death seemed inevitable, and my charger himself shrunk from crossing that hollow square alone ; I spurred him on, and passed scathless ; I delivered my despatch, and orders were given for a full force to join my gallant colonel ; I returned to tell him help was at hand, the same danger awaited me on my return ; I rushed headlong through ; a ball struck my shako and pierced it right through, another lodged in my arm, but I held up. I had by that time reached my corps ; an approving hurrah welcomed me back ; I knew not at the time I had done more than my duty. When the glorious day was over, I had my wound cared for ; the extracting of the ball proved painful,

but I heeded not that; my colonel's report had made me known. I found myself gazetted as major, and I soon rose from my sick-bed, feeling something like the biggest man in the army. Mother, how proud and happy you will feel on reading this,—happier still, perhaps, when I add that my bad arm disables me for some time to come, and I have been granted a sick-leave. Fain would I have won more laurels, but I must come home to be taken care of by Ellen and you; the doctor declares I am in a bad state from over-exertion after my wound, and complete rest can alone save me from amputation. Sweet Ellen, dear little sister-friend, will you cheer the invalid with your old home songs? Let my room be the same I had when I was a boy; let me find nothing changed in my dear old associations. I feel even uncomfortable at thinking Ellen's pretty childish features must have altered; but to me she will ever wear the most admired, the most loving of little faces. I have already trespassed much on the patience of my kind nurse. Dear father, mother, Ellen, farewell; expect me in a fortnight."

"I think I must conclude as my boy does," said Mr. O'Sullivan, apologizing for having trespassed much on your patience.

"Oh no! no!" was repeated by several voices at once; "let's have another bumper to the major;" and the ladies, returning to the drawing-room, all crowded round Mrs. O'Sullivan, and expressed their sympathetic pleasure.

"Dear friend," she said, returning Mrs. Irvington's embrace, "how I wish you could look forward to the same happiness."

"Ah, yes! many years have elapsed since I

have seen my Georgy's face, and Heaven knows when that meeting may take place; but I must not be selfish although your son's return will bring much regret to my mind."

"How happy you are, Ellen," said Immacolata; "you have become quite radiant since this good news arrived: how pleasant it must be to have a brother!"

"Oh! but such a brother as mine, Ima,—such a friend; there is none to equal James."

"A warm and well-merited eulogium," interrupted a voice behind her.

"Oh, sir," exclaimed Ellen, rising quickly, and a little abashed, "I was not aware I was speaking loud enough to be heard; I had not seen you enter."

"I beg pardon for intruding in this ladies' circle," said the gentleman, whose garb bespoke him a priest; "but I had not been near enough Mrs. O'Sullivan at the dinner-table to congratulate her, and I feel more pleasure in that duty, than in the company of the gentlemen below, being by habit a water-drinker."

He spoke with a foreign accent, his bearing was dignified, yet his conversation cheerful and pleasing. Residing in the neighbourhood he had become the valued friend of all the Catholic families, at the same time that his amiable manners and superior education won him the hearts of many of a different persuasion. He took a chair by the side of Mrs. O'Sullivan, spoke kindly of her son, and joined in all the subjects of conversation which were broached in the course of the evening.

The Rev. Mr. Baroni was a Piedmontese: he had been asked by an English family abroad to

take charge of the education of their little boy; he returned to England with his young charge, and, after fulfilling his task, he was induced to take up his residence in a country where a wide field lay open to his apostolical labours and his zeal. By degrees his habits had become so English that he had no wish of returning to the land of his birth. Yet the Italian language remained perfectly familiar to him, and he often found it useful when circumstances brought him in contact with foreigners whose political principles forced them to take refuge on England's soil; the arrival of Mr. Falconer and of his daughter was hailed by him as a most auspicious event. Miss Falconer he had often seen when she spent her holidays at Ivy Cottage, and anxiously did he hope his young countrywoman would bring to his parish that fervour of Catholicism which his experienced eye discerned in her.

A similarity of tastes had opened the way to an acquaintance with Mr. Falconer, for Mr. Baroni devoted himself in his leisure moments to painting, and was a proficient in the art. The gentlemen met, and conversed in the Italian language, which to the English sculptor was like a second mother-tongue; a friendly feeling sprang up at once between them, and Mr. Falconer, although a Protestant, invited the Italian priest, as a welcome guest, to his table. Several hours passed pleasantly and swiftly in friendly conversation; and it was long ere the party assembled at Laburnum Hill thought of dispersing; when, at last, all the guests had withdrawn, and Immacolata retired to her solitary chamber, a strange feeling of liberty came over her, she was alone for the first time; her childhood had been subjected to the mild but

regular discipline of school ; she had never known nor wished for freedom from rule. She opened her window, and, unconstrained, indulged in reverie ; she thought of the convent chapel, untenanted at that hour, save by the lamp which burned nightly in presence of the tabernacle. How often had she, at a similar hour, stolen into that sweet abode during the evening recreation, and in that dread silence outpoured her young heart before its Maker ; how lofty had been her aspirations in these moments of interior recollection ; how beautiful the visions faith had revealed to her young mind which sought its resting-place at the foot of God's holy throne ; ardent and mysterious had been her longings for the pure life and consecration of the virgins called to follow Christ ; fervent was her prayer that Jesus would take to Himself the love in which her heart abounded, and confirm her in that charity which is stronger than death. And when the last bell of the day closed the series of convent duties, and recalled the young girl to join her companions, she had implored that the *Light of the Sanctuary* might hold her place before God. Now that she was far away, she knew that place was still held, that no storm could extinguish that light, no outward wind divert it from its direction on high : could she promise the Lord that she too would prove faithful and constant ; could she hope that in the lamp of her love, lit at the pure flame of God's altar, the oil of faith would never fail, and that, like the Virgins of the Gospel, she would be found ready for the coming of the celestial bridegroom.

Oh yes ! she hoped so, ardently and from her heart ; perhaps her hope had not enough of that spiritual fear which is the beginning of wisdom ;

perhaps the ardent girl required the virtue of humility to temper her impetuous nature: she thought not of this; the cold night-air recalled her from her musings, she closed the casement, and kneeling, prayed for her departed mother and her father; then imploring the blessing of Mary, she sought that sleep, peaceful and undisturbed, which visits the couch of youth.

CHAPTER VI.

It was the 1st of May; the sun rose on the waters, Albion's mighty element and second kingdom; an East-Indiaman rode gallantly into the harbour of —; she had performed a long voyage, and sailors, all in their clean attire, had been on deck before daybreak, discerning, with eyes accustomed to see in the distance, the rocky cliffs of dear old England. A young lieutenant paced the deck in very exuberant spirits: when land had been announced, his state of excitement was so great as to show alarming symptoms of an inclination to jump overboard.

"Hallo, George!" cried out one of his friends, "are you going to try a ducking? Now, I don't feel inclined to pick you up, so look to the consequences."

"'Tis English water," said the young man musingly to himself, "and there is English land!"

"Don't, egad! tumble into a romantic fit; now, I'd rather, of the two, see you wild, George."

But the young man was heedless of his friend's talk; he drew some letters from his pocket-book, leant over the ship's side, and read. The other looked at him, spoke, and received no answer; he felt tempted to shake him, and make the letters drop into the water, but the reader's expression of countenance was so earnest, he felt that would be a cruel joke; he satisfied himself with seizing

on a speaking-trumpet, and bawling out, "George Irvington!" The young man looked up, not much moved—

"What's the matter, Frank? you stunned me."

"What *is* the matter? I ask you what despatches have you got there that have turned you so blue all in a moment?"

"Frank! I am come home after being away ten years, and the thought of such a happiness had nearly set me wild; I am going to look on my dear mother's face again; then, when you called me to reason, I remembered I might perhaps find changes in my home, and the thought has sobered me."

"And all these are your mother's letters?"

"Almost all; I have none others, except a few."

"Some pretty girl's tokens?"

"A few, but written in a childish hand; for years I have only heard of her through my mother."

"God bless you, George, for a warm-hearted, affectionate fellow that you are; take care of your heart; though I dare say there ain't much of that article remaining—given away long ago, isn't it?"

"There's a large share left for you, Frank, keep it, and, I say, come and see me, you know my address."

So saying, he flung his cap into the air, for they had really neared land, and took his place among the many anxious to get leave to go on shore. Almost afraid of losing one minute of his three years' leave of absence, he jumped into a cab, flew to the railway station, and never stopped, night or day, till he arrived at the threshold of

his home. He had a double motive in being so precipitous; to precede the notice of his vessel's arrival, and to surprise the home which had not seen him since his boyhood. He entered the well-known garden—his heart beat as he rang the bell:

"Mrs. Irvington?" he asked, in a quick anxious voice.

"Not at home, sir," was the answer of the maid-servant who opened.

"Where is she to be found?"

"Mistress is dining with Mr. and Mrs. O'Sullivan next door. I will call the gardener's boy to show you the way, sir."

But before the civil maid had finished her sentence, the young man had jumped over the wall, which separated the two gardens, and rushed headlong into the low-ceiled parlour. There was no one there but a young lady reading. She started to her feet at the sudden apparition of the stranger, and looked much surprised. "You cannot be so changed," he said, with an admiring glance; "it surely cannot be Ellen?"

"No," she replied quietly, half pleased. "I am not Ellen, but her very dear friend. Are you her brother?"

"Brother! no, most assuredly! I am Mrs. Irvington's son. Is she not here?"

"Mrs. Irvington is upstairs;" and she left the room where the young man remained standing with folded arms, anxiously gazing at the door. Presently it opened, slowly and noiselessly. The rustle of a silk dress was heard; then the beloved features were exposed to the young man's view. Though paler and thinner, it was his dear mother's face. He felt as if ten years had flown away, and he was again the boy of former days, and, with all

the fondness of childish love, he clasped her in his arms. "Mamma!" he said.

Mrs. Irvington did not hear him. George felt her frame sinking; her head fell on his shoulder: he carried her to the sofa, and vigorously pulled the bell. He did not turn round to see who entered now; he was kneeling by his mother's side. Kissing her hands and her face, other arms were laid on him, and a voice, which he heeded not at that moment, exclaimed, "It is not James; can it possibly be George?" He thought only of his mother. "Help her!" he said, "oh, help her! I have been imprudent; I have hurt her. What is to be done?"

"Go away, George," said Mrs. O'Sullivan; "go, and leave me alone with her till she has recovered from the shock."

The young man rose, and rushed out into the garden almost with the same impetuosity he had entered.

A few minutes after, Mrs. O'Sullivan beckoned to him through the window, and he returned. His mother was sitting in an armchair, and, near her, the two girls who had aided her friend in restoring her. All moved to withdraw when the young man returned to the affected meeting; but Mrs. Irvington asked them to remain.

"Stay, dear friends, you all will sympathize with me. My dear, my long absent Georgy! it was joy, dear boy: thanks for having caused me so much joy."

"Dear, dear mamma, I am so angry with myself for my stupidity. I ought to have apprised you of my coming; and here I am, alarming everybody, recognizing no one. Dear Mrs. O'Sullivan, forgive me for being such a fool.

How is your dear husband, your daughter? are they all well? Am I such a scarecrow that no one will look at me?"

"My daughter is here. Ellen, my child, where are you?"

The young girl came forward from behind Mrs. Irvington's chair.

"Ellen," he exclaimed, "oh, you have hardly grown. I would have recognized you in the midst of the Atlantic. Fancy my taking the lady I met here, on entering, for you: I am very glad to see you again; but you are very silent."

Ellen's heart was so full, she could hardly speak, and looked to her mother for help.

"You have hardly a right to complain, George, of the confused reception you have met this morning. We are in daily expectation of my son James's return, and your apparition was so unexpected—so ghostlike. God knows with what pleasure we welcome you home; but you have much altered, and I am not surprised at Ellen being rather startled. My dear Ima, I must introduce to you this boisterous young gentleman, whose entrance so startled you. Miss Falconer, Lieutenant Irvington."

The young man bowed.

"And now, dear friend," resumed Mrs. O'Sullivan, "if you feel strong enough, we will go to breakfast for our traveller's sake, as well as our own."

"Dear Mrs. O'Sullivan, I am not fit for ladies' society. Behold me! such as salt water and much railroading have left me. I had hoped to indulge in the luxury of soap and hot water at my dear mother's house, and——"

"My dear boy," interrupted his mother, "you

look so tired and faint, that I am sure our kind friends will excuse you; and as for personal appearance, you can lay that consideration aside for the present. Let me lean on you, George; you are taller than your father;" and the proud mother gazed on the handsome features which years and much toil had so much developed. The sunburnt forehead, the humorous eyes, the manly gait and dignified bearing,—all showed that George had fulfilled the promises of his boyhood.

It was a merry breakfast-table that at which the young mariner sat, talking to every one at the same time, but to his mother most of all, telling three stories at once, interrupting his tale by repeated questions, appealing to old memories and half-forgotten associations. Every one listened to him, Mrs. Irvington with tears and smiles; the girls, with the pleasure which his varied conversation afforded to their well-informed minds. Nothing, though, exceeded his merriment at his having for a moment been taken for his old friend James. Heartily did he rejoice at the account of his brilliant achievement, and at the prospect of his approaching arrival.

When, at last, they rose and retired to the drawing-room, he walked round with the familiarity of an old acquaintance, looking at everything. He opened the piano, and asked Ellen to play. As she sat down, in compliance with his request, he stooped down, as if looking at some music, and asked—"Where she had picked up that beautiful friend of hers?"

"At school, where we were together since little children."

"What is that rum name they call her by;

isn't it the swan, whom old Jove paid his addresses to?"

"You mean Leda," replied Ellen, smiling. "No; papa and mamma call her Ima, to make it English; but the real name is Immacolata."

"Well! that's as odd as can be, I'm sure; does she play?"

"Oh! yes, and sings, too, beautifully in Italian; you shall hear her," said Ellen, half rising.

"Oh no! don't; pray do *you* play."

She sat down again, and her agile fingers ran mechanically over the keys; but her thoughts were very distracted, and she did not accompany her music with the sentiment which was her wont; she felt so herself, and calling Immacolata to take her place, she left the piano. The fair Italian was a first-rate performer, and when she sang the songs of her childhood, there was a music in her voice which thrilled the heart of the listener; her father came to her side, deeply touched at the recollections her notes brought to his memory; no one else understood the words, but all loved the pathos of the young musician. George Irvington remained listening to her, long after the last sounds had died away; he seemed to have lost all idea of moving from where he sat, till his mother came and touched him on the shoulder.

"I thought my son was in a violent hurry to go home and dress; it is time we should leave our kind friends."

The young man was himself in a moment, offered his mother his arm, and walked up to his hosts.

"Let us see you very often, George," they said cordially.

Ellen did not resume the familiar appellation of their childish days.

"Good morning, Mr. Irvington," she said, with a quiet smile, and held out her hand with the frankness which was her wont, but she was very pale.

There is, in the mind where innocence has been preserved, an immense and quiet happiness, which belongs not to earth; it gushes out in the calm and radiant eyes which are illumined as if from within; it is discernible in the elastic step, the light and joyous laugh, the words so exuberant, so full of truth, and devoid of wordly wisdom; all denote the happy age which seeks for sunshine in the heaven of its own heart. Such had been, notwithstanding their dissimilarity of features, the striking likeness of expression between Ellen and Immacolata; but an invisible barrier seemed to arise between them from this day; they never spoke of the visitor whose return had been so remarkable an incident in their quiet lives, and their conversation was limited to a few subjects which had ceased to interest either of them; there was a change discernible in Immacolata's demeanour; she was more gay and talkative, and often laughed, while Ellen remained quite silent; her dress had, until now, been strictly neat; she began to pay more attention to her appearance, and indulged in little fashionable additions to her toilet; but these variations were so slight as to pass almost unobserved, but by a very attentive eye. Alas! poor convent flower, was it sinking to the earth already; had it forgotten that its early training, its own yearnings and aspirations had ever tended upwards, and that light and strength had been given it from above?

CHAPTER VII.

A few days more, and another inmate had joined the family of Ivy Cottage; among the sweet and pleasant preparations for his arrival, he had returned quietly and calmly to the home of his childhood, and resumed his place at the hearth where he was so much loved. The young soldier was pale and wan; he had suffered much more than his letters had told; fever had previously worn out his robust frame, and rendered him more unequal to bear the accident he had met with, and the subsequent fatigues of a camp life. It was sad to see one so young, propped up by pillows in an armchair, as if age had already visited him with its dire infirmities, but there was such a quiet, patient expression on the suffering brow; so much equanimity pervaded the words of the invalid; so rich were the treasures of intelligence of his well-stored mind, that all who approached him felt how much there was to admire in the superiority of his mind and conversation. At the end of a fortnight repose had done its work, and he was able to enjoy outdoor exercise, although his broken arm had still to be nursed, and was supported in a sling. Hours and hours would his mother and sister press near him, talking of the long years that had elapsed since they had met.

"Oh! James, how anxious I should have felt

had I known your health was so injured; had I had the least idea of it, you should have come home long ago."

"And lost my chance of advancement, dear mother, that would have been clever; say, dear Elly, don't you prefer a wounded hero, to a lazy brother in good health?"

"Why, 'tis very selfish of me James, but I can't feel sorry at your being ill, I so like to have something to do for you."

"Then I don't intend giving you that pleasure long, I feel so strong now; dearest, I love to hear you play, will you open your piano."

Ellen cheerfully complied, and with a voice which was not brilliant, but extremely musical, sang, Sweet Home! She was concluding the last words, and her brother had got so excited as to join her, when a rattling noise was heard at the window which opened on the garden, and a manly voice called out "Encore!" The next moment George Irvington had entered, and was violently shaking his friend by the hand.

"Egad! James, you're looking alive again, we shall make something of you yet; I am delighted at the prospect, for you certainly did look booked for the next life the first day you came home; and so your sister plies you with music for physic: that's capital, Ellen—Miss O'Sullivan, I beg pardon; I wish you a good morning. I'd no idea you played so beautifully, 'pon my word I didn't like to interrupt you, and walked round to the window to hear: why do you always give up the piano to Miss Falconer?"

"Oh! I am not to be compared to Immacolata," said Ellen, smiling.

Irvington looked a little confused. "I came in

to have a game at chess with you, James, do you feel inclined?"

"Oh! by all means, George; take a chair. Dear sister, will you please——" but Ellen had already drawn a table to his side with the board and box of chessmen.

"Thank you, fairy. Go back to the piano, will you, dear; 'twill be no interruption to us."

"Nay, brother, I know the mysteries of check-mate are not to be trifled with: I will go and look after my flowers, and come back when I suppose you've done."

"Don't stay long away, Elly."

"Oh! you shan't have time to miss me, James;" and she glided away.

The young man looked after her, and mused; he was surprised at the coldness with which George and his sister had greeted each other that morning: he had always looked upon Irvington as the destined husband of Ellen; for the intimacy between the families, the wishes of both their parents, the childish affection so long kept up, all seemed to have prepared a desired and most suitable union. James could not understand how matters stood, nor on whose side the fault lay; he was disturbed, and thought of it, and made two or three wrong moves. His partner looked up from the game.

"I say, James, what's come over you?"

O'Sullivan, passing his hand over his forehead, recalled his attention and flying thoughts.

About an hour elapsed without the players exchanging another word, when the door opened noiselessly; Ellen entered and stood by the table; both the young men's heads were bent over the table, and neither spoke, but James held out his

hand to his sister; she pressed it gently, and then with the same caution, moved away again. Another quarter of an hour elapsed, and there was a ringing at the gate, a swinging of the garden door, a light step was heard on the garden walk, and a cheerful voice was heard calling out, "Dear Ellen, where are you?"

It was now George's turn to become inattentive to the game; and although no one entered the room, and the players remained undisturbed as before, there was a sound of pleasant talk going on which interested them both.

"Aren't you tired of our morning's work, James?" exclaimed his friend at last: "there's no end to it; suppose we give up."

"Nay! I'd have piqued myself on not breaking off; but its not much matter, here goes;" and he collected the chess-men and folded up the board.

Ellen's figure appeared again at the glass door. "Done, brother?" she asked.

"All but, dearest: we can't get to the end, and you've lured us away."

"Are you coming out, James? it feels so pleasant and warm;" and she refastened the sling of his arm which had got loose.

"Immacolata has come to propose a riding party: do you think you feel strong enough?"

"Certainly, dear; I was just wishing very much to mount and see all my old haunts again:" then, seeing that George had already left the room, he looked anxiously and inquiringly at his sister. "What is the matter between you?" he asked in a low voice.

"Oh don't, James," she said, and cast down her eyes, as if afraid to meet his glance.

"You'll tell me all, Elly, by-and-by."

She made no answer, save taking his other arm and going out. Immacolata was sitting under an arbour, where George Irvington had found her, and was speaking to her; she had taken off her hat, and her eyes sparkled with a merriment which was not familiar to her. James O'Sullivan bowed coldly to Miss Falconer; he had made up his mind to dislike this girl whom every one admired; he was annoyed at finding Ellen eclipsed by her superior beauty and accomplishments. An unusual degree of affection had been cultivated between James and his sister; there was not much difference in their ages, just enough for Ellen to look up to her brother with a pleased acknowledgment of his superiority; while he, with an equally friendly feeling, interested himself in all her pursuits, and when they were children together, constantly endeavoured to improve her mind from all the information he derived from his well-directed studies. The sweet tie of one faith which both had been taught, although James had neglected most of its practices in the various scenes of his military life, had united still more strongly those young minds, and rendered their perfect confidence in each other a happy necessity. James could keep nothing concealed from his sister, not even his faults, for even they belonged to a noble character, untouched as yet by the world's wickedness. Ellen's innocent heart had likewise been all open to her brother, except perhaps within a few days, and even that James's affectionate penetration had discovered; he saw that some change had come over her, although her features were still those he had loved in childhood; gentle and even as was her temper always, there were times when her heightened colour bespoke an

ill-suppressed agitation; he knew not what her manner had been towards Immacolata, but it seemed to him devoid of that warmth of feeling which is generally shown towards a best friend: nor was the young Italian so unreserved as usual in the presence of Ellen; yet she was not unkind, she had not lost her affection for the latter, but she had been so unaccustomed in her youth to admiration, it was so new to her to receive compliments on her beauty and accomplishments, that her pleased vanity now got the better of her; she listened first in a moment of forgetfulness, and was drawn on insensibly to indulge in the perilous pastime. Endowed with too many gifts perhaps, possessed of a warm and pure heart, she needed to be reminded of the warning. "Let him who standeth take heed lest he fall." As to Ellen, she strove, in a silent and lonely struggle, to obtain the mastery of her feelings: although less demonstrative than Immacolata, her reserve was the result of native modesty, not of indifference.

Years had passed since George Irvington, in his childishness and love for fun, had called her his little wife. She had never forgotten that name; in the innocent aspirations of her young mind, she had looked forward, not to the indulging of romantic passions, but to the fulfilling of the duties God would give her in the paths of a married life; she had always expected to be united to George, and, although he was a Protestant, she knew her parents would look to all that would render her free and undisturbed in the enjoyment of her faith. Thus the gentle girl had accepted her future, as prepared by God and her parents; and now, was all this to be dashed to the ground

by the girl she had looked upon as a sister. George was all her warmest wishes could have pictured to her, nor could she look at his handsome, manly features without feeling she had cherished for him a long and growing love; but she saw in him nought to correspond, and could she command affection where she did not find it? All his talk, his amusing anecdotes, his admiration was for Immacolata, and when he spoke to her he was ill at ease. She saw and understood it all; she would allow a few days to pass over, in order to accustom herself calmly to the thought that George loved another; but she would not be trifled with, she intended speaking to him, and releasing both him and herself from any previously understood engagement. This resolution had restored her to her wonted serenity, and it was without the least fear, and rather with the honest pride of a conscience quite at ease, that she had walked out, leaning on her brother's arm, and had joined George and Immacolata in the arbour. Miss Falconer was turning over rapidly the pages of a book, and her voice was animated in a playful discussion:—

“Ellen, dearest,” she said, as her friend approached, “will you please help me out of an argument? My friend, Lamartine, here says, ‘No one can be great without enthusiasm.’ I can’t find the passage; but Mr. Irvington wants to talk cold English against my favourite poet, and that I can’t allow.”

“Prove yourself in the right, Immacolata; it is very easy: you can warm even cold English.”

“Nay, dear Ellen, I want you to give me your opinion.”

“’Tis contrary to yours, and therefore not acceptable.”

"So you stand by me, Miss O'Sullivan," said George; "then I've won."

"No," replied the young girl coldly; "I only hold to my own views; I do not think enthusiasm is at all necessary to aid in the accomplishment of great things; by it we may conquer a momentary difficulty, struggle against a passing storm, but to accomplish a duty, to become really great, it requires something more durable than enthusiasm."

"For shame, Elly!" interrupted her brother, "I had no idea you were so practical and unromantic."

"James," she replied, turning her affectionate eyes on him, "when you acted the part of a hero at the Redan, was it the enthusiasm of the moment that led you onwards?"

"No, sagacious sister; I think I was prepared to meet danger by a longing desire which I had had for months before, the wish to distinguish myself."

"I know it, brother; and I assert, calm courage and the simple feeling of duty are more capable of great deeds than a momentary impulse."

"By Jove!" exclaimed George, "there's logic; upon my word, Miss O'Sullivan, I couldn't put ten words together in that style; why do you speak so little when you can talk so well?"

Ellen did not reply, nor even look at him.

"What a very long straying from our ride, Immacolata, which you came in so animated about! my brother will come, and perhaps Mr. Irvington too."

"Oh, I'm up to any fun," said George; "I'll go and order my horse at once."

"Very well," said Ellen, "then James and I

will wait for you here ; our ponies will be soon saddled. Ima, had you not better go and dress ? ”

“ Allow me to accompany you, Miss Falconer,” said George.

“ And I’ll see to my sister’s pony,” said James, “ and ride the quiet mare myself, as I can’t afford to perform feats of horsemanship.”

“ That’s a dear, good, sensible brother.” A slight shade passed over her countenance, as she saw George waiting at the door for Immacolata, but she recovered at once : “ I will be ready very soon,” she said, and ran back into the house.

Shortly after, the riding party was assembled at the door of Ivy Cottage, and sallied out in high spirits. Ellen did not share the general gaiety ; from motives easily understood she was silent and kept by her brother’s side. Immacolata’s conversation was, on the contrary, sparkling with wit and vivacity. Their ride lasted some hours ; Ellen felt it had served to strengthen her in the persuasion that George did not think or care for her, hardly once had he fallen back and come by her horse’s side. When they had dismounted at the cottage door, her brother called out, in a somewhat irritated tone,—

“ George, come and help my sister ; don’t you see my arm prevents me ! ”

“ Thank you,” said Ellen, descending quickly ; “ I don’t require much attention, Brownie is so used to me ; ” and she patted the pony, and averted her face. Her cheek was flushed ; she bade good-bye hurriedly to her friend, and rushed up to her room ; her mother was coming down, and met her on the staircase.

"My dear girl," she said, embracing her, "you must have been taking violent exercise, you look so hot and tired."

"We rode slowly, dear mamma, but I do feel fatigued; I am going to take off my habit and rest."

"Do my love; there is still time before dinner."

Ellen entered her room, and, shutting the door, fell on a chair, silently weeping tears she had repressed all day. Youth is proverbially a season of enjoyment, and yet, alas! it ignores not the visits of sorrow; spring flowerets are often nipped by the bitter blasts of the north; the faculties of the mind are in their first freshness, the chords of the heart untouched, and every outward impression causes a profound vibration in those delicate fibres of feeling which have not yet been used. The first sigh of disappointment which is heaved by a youthful breast is, perhaps, the most painful of life; it reveals a hidden source of sorrow which may not flow in tears; future trials will come, but they will find the mind stronger, and more apt to bear them.

Ellen indulged long and silently in the tears she considered a farewell to her young and innocent love; then, feeling the want of comfort and advice, she knelt down in fervent prayer, and found her consolation where we never seek it in vain.

CHAPTER VIII.

It was Ellen's twenty-first birthday, and Ivy Cottage presented all the appearance of a fête; the gardeners had, in the morning, ornamented the hall with wreaths of flowers; and when Miss O'Sullivan descended very early from her bedroom, she was greeted by the poor children of the neighbourhood, who, presenting her with little offerings of baskets of fruit and birds-nests, wished her many returns of the day. She shook hands with them all, and invited them to a dinner, which her father had, at her request, given orders to be served on the lawn for his tenants. At the pleased sound of thanks which succeeded her invitation, both Mr. and Mrs. O'Sullivan came out into the hall, and there pressed to their arms their darling child. Ellen gratefully responded to the fond embrace, and proceeded with her mother to the chapel where the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass was that morning offered for her. On entering she approached the Tribunal of Penance; it was occupied by another kneeling form; she withdrew, and, bowing her head, awaited her turn in recollection and prayer. There was already peace upon her brow, although the pardon which washes out our sins in the blood of the Immaculate Lamb had not yet brought to her heart its purifying influence; but the preparation for confession contains in itself a practice of so many virtues that this one act of Catholicism sufficiently shows the wisdom

and holiness of its doctrines. Is not humility most repugnant to our proud natures, so far removed from it indeed that the spiritual-minded look upon its exercise as a heroism among the sons of Adam: the searching and knowing oneself is the very acme of perfection, even in the opinion of the sages, and who will not recognize in repentance the virtue of the fallen, and in the soul who bows down in sorrow to rise again in love, the impulse of divine grace, which commands obedience and awe? Yet, this mystery of our faith is the one which has found the most enemies. Confession, it has been said by a genius whose pen only expressed a popular error, is a foul encouragement to crime; he knew not that a sincere hatred to sin is the first and indispensable condition for receiving the pardon thereof; there is no forgiveness for those who approach the tribunal of reconciliation with enmity in their hearts, and if, alas! some have deceived God's minister, who only receives avowals in His name, they shall receive their punishment from Him whose all-seeing eye trieth men's hearts, and alloweth no guile. Ellen was well instructed in her duty, and before entering the chapel she had put away all feeling which had agitated her for some time past, and she now banished all thought save that of God's holy presence. A slight tremor passed over her as Immacolata rose from her kneeling position and passed before her, with eyes cast down and tearful; but she reiterated internally a promise of forgiveness, and her own prayer for pardon, and took the place which remained vacant. A few minutes after, both the girls were at the altar, both had sought light at the same source, both had found in the much calumniated sacra-

ment the spirit of sacrifice and self-denial ; it would have been difficult to tell, in seeing them both kneeling and humbled, which had wronged the other or which had to forgive. Immacolata seemed absorbed in grief ; her feelings brought her back to another altar, where she had knelt with the friend of her childhood, where she had promised to be faithful unto death ; a few days had sufficed to obliterate her best resolves ; she had listened to vanity, and opened to profane sentiments a heart she had given to Jesus ; and, violating all the laws of honour, had betrayed the confidence of her best friend. Oh, how ardent arose in her the desire to expiate the serious though passive error, how she resolved to execute the advice she had just received, repair the past, and fly henceforward the remotest occasion of sin ; she struck her breast, with the words of the publican, applied them to herself with a strong conviction of her own unworthiness, and rose justified to receive the spotless Victim which, like the symbolical manna, varies its sweetness according to the dispositions of those who receive. Ellen knelt by the side of her friend, as on the day of her first communion, and withdrew from the Holy Altar carrying with her a fortitude which she previously knew not of. Her thanksgiving was long, and her radiant features spoke of a heart whose combats were over, and who found rest in its noble resolves ; she bowed under the trial with which it had pleased God to afflict her, only the more painful in that it came from a hand she loved ; but it mattered not ; her mind was made up to the sacrifice, and she offered it to God. She would give up the love that had been to her pure heart a treasure of happiness ; she

would leave to her friend the heart of him she could no longer claim as her own, and seek for satisfaction in the approbation of her own conscience. Such was the offering she deposed on God's altar, on her birthday morning, when life seemed to her to have lost much of its bright visions; but she trusted and looked onwards. Her father and mother rose to leave the chapel, Ellen followed them; on the threshold Immacolata came close behind her.

"Happy birthday, Ellen," she said. Her friend turned round and cordially embraced her.

Mr. O'Sullivan offered her his arm, "Let me secure you, Miss Falconer, for you must come home to us, and spend the whole day with Ellen;" and they walked on a few steps; Mrs. O'Sullivan followed, holding her daughter's hand in silence, for her heart was full.

The whole of the day was taken up with the receiving of friends, who had been invited from the neighbouring towns, and arrived for dinner. Many other guests were to come later in the evening to a ball given in honour of Ellen; and Immacolata went home to dress without having been able to exchange a word in private with her friend. When she returned with her father, the drawing-room was so full, that she sought Ellen in vain: all eyes were turned upon herself, and had she looked at the mirror upon the staircase, it would have repeated to her the general whisper, that she had never looked more lovely; but she had bid farewell to vanity, and cared for admiration no more. Her hair was simply braided, as had been her wont from childhood; a wreath of small yellow flowers encircled her brow, and on her bosom and the skirt of her white dress

were disposed at intervals small nosegays of her favourite *gaggia*; devoid of corolla or leaves, the flower was, indeed, the most suited to resist the heated atmosphere of the ball-room, and its perfume never diminished. She was sitting on a bench near the door, and had exchanged a word with many persons she knew, when James O'Sullivan passed before her, and, without addressing, made her a cold salutation, and passed on quickly; she rose immediately.

"Mr. O'Sullivan, do pray tell me where is Ellen?"

"In the boudoir, beyond."

"Will you take me there? I have not seen her yet;" and, as if fearing his non-compliance, she passed her arm in his. They moved on without exchanging a word, for Immacolata had grown to be afraid of Ellen's brother. A small apartment had been fitted up between the dancing and supper rooms, and thither Ellen had retired, after aiding her mother in the duty of receiving her guests. Her brother called her, bowed again to his companion, and withdrew.

Ellen advanced smiling and cheerful: "My dear Ima, what a pretty toilet! You are true to the old name,—Convent Flower, again?"

"Oh! Ellen, kind Ellen, don't call me so."

"How beautiful they are! Where did you get them in such profusion?"

"From the convent. Edith sent them to me by the old gardener, Paul; he had some purchases to make in town, and came all the way down here on purpose. Papa offered him a bed at our house for the night, which he is quite pleased at. Ellen, I want to speak to you."

"Of what, dear love?"

"Of much that I had forgotten, and which these flowers bring back to me."

"Be composed, dear; you seem quite distressed. Be yourself again, Ima;" and she affectionately took her hand.

"I wish I were like you, Ellen."

"Don't say that; it is an idle wish. Come, the music has begun;" and she went back with her to the dancing-room, where, seeking out a circle of her young friends, they took part in their conversation and amusements; soon, however, the pretty group was dispersed by the lively music, as partners were at hand to secure each for the promised dance.

James came to his sister: "Elly, what! are you not dancing?"

"Is it necessary for me to go out the first?" she asked, with a smile.

"Of course, it is your ball, and you ought to open it."

"Take me out, then, brother."

"Very rude!" muttered James, "d——d rude of no one else to have come and asked you."

"Don't say that; I did not feel inclined to dance. But it is too late, brother; we have no *vis-à-vis*;" and she looked inclined to return to her place; but at the same moment George who had only just entered the ball-room, saw at a first glance Miss Falconer standing alone, and a place unoccupied in the quadrille. He went up to her at once.

Immacolata declined.

"The quadrille will be spoiled," he said.

She complied, and took the place opposite her friend.

James thought a new slight had been offered

his sister, and his eyes flashed fire. He forgot the figures, and had to be reminded of them by his sister, who good-humouredly inquired what was the cause of his absence of mind.

"Elly, don't look such an angel; you make me angry."

The young lady repressed an immoderate fit of laughter: she was disposed to enjoy everything; for the peace that was within her enlivened her spirits, and her manner resumed the innocent gaiety she had lost of late. She moved in the dance with a native grace devoid of affectation, and a total forgetfulness of her personal appearance; her happy looks rendered her a contrast with her friend, who seemed to have brought to the evening's entertainment an unusual degree of melancholy: each time they met in the figures, Ellen's hand was the first offered; Immacolata remained silent, and hardly smiled. James took his sister back to her seat, and in so doing found himself face to face with George, who was performing the same duty towards Miss Falconer; he was going to address him, when his sister interrupted.

"Mr. Irvington, I wish to go out on that balcony; will you take me there?" He looked surprised, and offered his arm. The balcony was covered with an awning, carpeted and laden with flowers; chairs had been placed there, so as to form a prolongation of the room. She sat down, and showed him a chair by her side. "Do you remember an evening nine years ago, Mr. Irvington?" He made no answer. "Sit down; we are old friends, and can talk at leisure. I think we both require a frank explanation, and I suppose you are too polite to ask for, or to give one."

"I am quite at a loss."

"Very well, then! I will speak for both. Do you remember a night like this, a ball in these rooms when we were children?"

"Ellen!"

"I wish you in future to address me in terms of a common acquaintance, nothing more."

"Ellen, do you mean to——"

"To look upon childish engagements, then contracted, tacitly consented to in growing years, and binding, perhaps, still to your honour,—to consider them quite disregarded, and yourself at liberty to place your esteem and affection on whom you please."

"I am not aware of having offended Miss O'Sullivan."

"I am above coquetry, Mr. Irvington, and will admit of no trifling on this subject: you have perfectly understood me;" and she rose to go.

George was moved by her generosity: "Ellen," he said, one word more, "I am afraid I have been foolish."

"After-reflections are not pleasant," she replied. "Good-bye."

He remained alone, crossed his arms, and leant over the railing: "Noble girl!" he exclaimed, "she is too good for me, too superior; after all, I should prefer a younger wife, and it's not pleasant to feel engaged. I can look about me now, egad! I can choose at leisure, and I don't mean to get noosed in a hurry. Her friend is far prettier: I feel awkward at meeting either of them now, but there's nothing like a bold face in such matters; I am not going to give up a ball for Ellen's pretty logic. She needn't have huffed me so; a man can surely look at another girl without being turned off in that style. I'm not going to

be put out." So saying, he passed once or twice through the rooms with an air of perfect self-satisfaction, danced, and returning to Miss Falconer, asked her for the next waltz.

"I don't wish to dance any more," she said quietly, but decidedly.

George took heart of grace, and made up to Ellen.

"I do not waltz," she said; and then added with a frank smile, "I am glad to see you bear no malice; I don't mean to refuse you—I neither waltz nor polka."

He bowed and withdrew.

Dance succeeded dance, but nothing could tempt Immacolata: in vain George stood by her chair, and talked; she answered briefly. Her retiring behaviour was so marked as to attract the attention of her friend, who came to her more than once.

"Are you ill, dearest?" she asked.

"No, I don't think so; at least, not much. Don't mind me, Ellen; but you are not dancing, either."

"Not just now," she replied; "I can't join in that you see;" and she looked at the couples closely linked, twirling round with such speed as seemed calculated to put music at defiance, and looked hardly becoming amusement for lady-like society.

Immacolata looked her friend earnestly in the face: "You never forget what is right, Ellen."

"Immacolata, you look far from well; I am afraid you are cold from sitting still; do come and walk about with me."

"My dear love," said her father, coming behind her at the same moment, "is it your pleasure that we proceed to supper?"

"Papa wants me to be quite sure it is my birthday. Well, if I am to rule the evening, I will speak: open Sesame, very readily, for I am almost ashamed to say I feel a very good appetite."

"Let me lead you in then, my girl."

The signal was efficacious; the music stopped, the dancers remained for a moment invisible in the cloud of dust raised by their own exertions, and then filed off in pairs behind Mr. O'Sullivan and his daughter. The table was so large that it admitted of almost everybody sitting down at once. Ellen took her place by her mother, whom she had hardly seen in the course of the evening. "Will no one express to Miss O'Sullivan the general congratulations of the day," was whispered round the table, as the guests filled their glasses. James looked at Irvington: had he preserved the character he was supposed to fill as the accepted suitor of Ellen, it would certainly have been his right to rise; but, after the conversation he had held with her that evening, it was impossible; he looked at his plate in silence. It was Mr. Falconer, who, raising his glass, paid a pretty tribute to his young friend and daughter of their hospitable host, and wished her, in the name of all the company present, many returns of the day. Ellen looked her thanks, and asked her brother to express them. James's voice, in so doing, evinced a strong emotion. The ladies withdrew; James accompanied them to the door, then returned to the table where the gentlemen sat over their wine; George was at one extremity alone. James was angry, and his feelings, as is the wont of mild dispositions, were deep seated, and would be satisfied. He endeavoured to vent his spleen by some pettish remarks, which did not

at all meet George's fancy; he received them, however, with a coolness which only irritated the other the more.

"I say, O'Sullivan, I've noticed that of late you've been making rather too free with me; however, I've not resented it, for I believe you're——"

"What?" asked James, looking thunder.

"You're jealous of me, that's the fact!" said the other.

"Infernal puppy!" muttered James, with his teeth set.

"Please say that over again, will you? or I shall answer you at once: only we'd better get out of the hearing of the governor; he's looking over at us."

"I can't speak low; I'm choking. I'll go into the garden; come and meet me, if you've pluck."

So saying, he marched out; George was at his heels. "O'Sullivan," he said, "you're picking up straws; but I guess which way the wind blows: there's a lady in the case. But I brook insult from no one; apologize or give me satisfaction."

"I'll meet you when and where you please; but, of this I charge you, bring forward no pure name between us at this hour; the state you are in does not admit of it."

"It strikes me I'm more sober than you are; but I'll return your compliments in something better than words. You persist in insulting me."

"I will repeat what you deserve rather than retract."

"Very well; when shall we meet?"

"To-morrow morning, at sunrise, in the wood."

"All right; we shall find plenty of seconds above."

"No," said James, in a calmer tone than he had yet used; "nothing must transpire in this house until all is over, we must seek seconds elsewhere."

"All right."

"And I'll go and find mine at once." He rushed out, but remained a moment at the door to recover himself. He was breathless from excitement; all that had passed during the last quarter of an hour seemed so like a dream. For the love he bore his sister he had engaged in a quarrel with his friend; yet, if he fell, what would compensate her? He looked up at the balcony; there was nobody there. A motionless white drapery intercepted his gaze: perhaps behind that curtain was Ellen. He put his hand to his head, which he felt reeling, and tore himself away. George returned to the ball-room: at the moment he entered, Immacolata emerged from the balcony; but there were many guests between them, and he saw her not. Yet her eyes fastened on him with an unearthly gaze; she grew pale as a statue, and, leaning back on her seat, endeavoured, by breathing a smelling-bottle, to prevent herself swooning. When she had in some degree recovered, she sought out her father: he was in the card-room; she came behind his chair, and sat down, waiting till he had done. Mr. Falconer turned round, alarmed at his daughter's appearance: "My dear, you must be ill, very ill; what is the matter?"

"I do indeed, papa, feel far from well; will you take me home? I am afraid it is unkind to leave our friends so soon; but will you come back after taking me home?"

"Come at once, my love. Have you bid good night to Mrs. O'Sullivan and Ellen?"

"No," she replied, with an involuntary shudder; "I can't see Ellen just now; that is, I don't like to be seen going away so early. Will you take me out at this door, please, father, and apologize for me after?"

"As you like; the sooner you get to bed the better, I trust."

"Oh, I require nothing but rest; I shall be all right very soon."

So saying, they went down stairs, he put on her cloak, helped her to the carriage, and in a few seconds they had descended the short road which separated the two cottages. Mr. Falconer took his daughter up to her bedroom door.

"Now go, dear papa," she said. "Go back, or my disappearance will seem rude."

"Go to bed directly, love."

"Never mind me, papa; good night."

"How cold you are, my love," he said, as he embraced her; "I will send up the maid to light a fire for you; now, have a good sleep, and mind you are all rosy and smiling to-morrow."

Mr. Falconer returned to the ball, and told Ellen of the sudden indisposition of her friend.

"I am very sorry it should have occurred to-night," she said; "but I remarked that all the evening she did not look herself; dear Ima, how I would have liked to go and put her to bed myself; but to-morrow I will take charge of her and bring her round."

She returned to her place, for another quadrille had commenced, and it was not till break of day that the dancers thought seriously of breaking up. Ellen was very tired, and long ere the last carriage had rolled away, her mother advised her to withdraw, telling her she would herself perform

the remaining duties of hospitality towards most of the guests, who, having come a distance, were to sleep at the cottage. Ellen gladly availed herself of the injunction: on the stairs she met her brother, who, taking the candle from her hand, said, "Let me light you up stairs, Ellen; you look rather wan after your night's fatigue."

"And you, James, don't present a very brilliant appearance. What became of you? you disappeared from the ball-room."

"Did you require me, Elly?"

"No, dear; but I missed you, for I never see enough of you." The young man averted his face.

"We are very fond of each other, sister."

"Yes, thank God! I only wish that we did not go different ways on one point."

"What is that, dear?"

"When we were children, James, we used to say our morning and night prayers together, and now I hardly know whether my brother is a Catholic."

They had reached the floor she slept on; James put down the light, and taking her hand, said, "Pray for me, Ellen."

"Dear James, you believe still, then?"

"Oh, yes! and some day, if God forgives me——"

"God forgives the moment we ask him; shall we ask him together, brother?"

"Oh, not now."

"To-morrow, then?"

"To-morrow, ha! who can tell what the morrow may bring: Ellen, whatever happens, will you always think of me as you do now?"

"James!"

"Will you forget my faults, and remember me only as an affectionate and devoted brother?"

"Dear James, it will be time to talk so when you return to your regiment, which I hope will not be very soon; come, wish me my birth-day more gaily." He bent over her, and impressed on her forehead a long and fervent kiss.

"God bless you, best of girls," he said; "God reward and take care of you."

She opened her door and disappeared; he remained standing in the same place for a moment or two, then seeing the first streaks of dawn appear at the windows, he went to his room, changed his dress, came out again, and went rapidly down the stairs.

Immacolata had listened to her father's receding footsteps, and when she felt herself alone she fell on her knees, and offered up a prayer which came from her very soul. Her maid presented herself to offer her services, but she refused them, desiring her to leave a lamp burning, and retire to rest herself. Half an hour elapsed, during which she retained her kneeling position; at length, it seemed that the light she had implored descended upon her; she started to her feet, uttered a joyous exclamation, opened the door noiselessly, and slipped down stairs to the dining-room, where she rapped at a closed door. No answer came: she rapped louder and louder; at length she called out, "Paul, my good old Paul, I must speak to you."

"Who's that?" exclaimed a voice from within.

"It is I, Paul; I am sorry to awake you, but you must get up, and come and speak to me here."

"Bless your little soul, it's dreaming of you, I was; is it yourself or a vision that's calling me?"

"It is myself, Paul, the Convent Flower; will you come and speak to me, if you love me?"

"I'll be ready directly, miss." She sat down on a low chair at the fire-place, the expiring embers not yet choked up by the ashes, glistened in fantastic forms; she had watched them often in childhood, but at this moment her imagination, gloomily impressed, saw in them a representation of the eternal torments, and she covered her face with her hands. In a few minutes the old gardener stood before her, equipped as in the daytime, although his grey hair looked very straggling, and his poor eyes seemed hardly open, although he had rubbed them much.

"Dear Paul," she said, "I am very sorry, but you will be glad when you see to-morrow how much I have confided in you; sit down, Paul, do."

"I beg pardon, miss, I am only your humble servant."

"Paul, you must be my friend to help me in what I am going to do," and she pushed a chair towards him. "Paul, you must, at sunrise, have a carriage waiting for me,—not here, lest papa should hear it, but at the first turning of the road; you must wait for me at the small door in the garden, take me on foot to the carriage, and then drive me where I want to go."

The old man looked in amazement, and began to fear the young lady was not right in her mind.

"Do you hear, Paul? You must drive me two miles hence to the outskirts of the wood; I must be there by sunrise."

A dark cloud came over his face:—

"Oh, miss! are you, then, no longer the Convent Flower, and is it something wrong you would make your poor old servant a party in?"

"God forbid, Paul! no: if we succeed, we shall have done the best action of all our lives, and with the help of our Heavenly Father we will, Paul; you will be ready for me?"

"I can't, miss, I'm sorry for it; but I'm sleeping under Mr. Falconer's roof, and I can't do what's to be kept secret from him; it can't be right." The young lady clasped her hands and remained for a moment absorbed in agonizing thought, then taking a sudden resolution:—

"Come nearer to me, Paul." The old man approached, she laid her white hands on his as she used to do when a little child, and whispered to him words of lengthened and solemn import.

"Will you now, Paul?" she said in conclusion.

"I will, miss, in God's name, yes; I'll wait in my room all dressed, miss; shall I go and knock at your door when the hour strikes?"

"No, Paul, for my father must suppose I'm asleep, and the least appearance of anything extraordinary in the house would put a stop to our proceedings; and then, oh God! what would be the result? Good bye, Paul; in two hours hence wait for me at the small garden door." She left him, and returned up-stairs; her room was warm and comfortable, her bed curtains unclosed, the quilt and pillow arranged for the night; all seemed to invite her to a repose which her agitated mind rendered her unfit for. What a strange impression is produced on the mind when it is struck in an hour of painful excitement by the motionless aspect of objects appertaining to our every-day life, and to which are attached so many tranquil associations. The lamp fastened in the ceiling threw down a pale and steady light; Immacolata's embroidery frame stood in the

window ; her bookcase showed the active presence of a hand often busied in displacing its numerous volumes ; on a rosewood writing-table were laid many pretty implements, presents from those who loved her, or memorials of by-gone days ; Miss Falconer was too agitated to think, but she felt pained by all this quiet ; she endeavoured to pray, but could not collect her thoughts : she took her rosary in her hands, and as her fingers passed over the beads, and her lips repeated the simple invocation, courage returned to her soul with the memory of Mary's dolours. She thought over her mother's words, and at this hour, perhaps the most trying of her life, she felt as if the blessing they contained would sanctify the task she had undertaken. She sought the dear relic over which had passed so many years ; clear and warning came the beloved voice, as if speaking from the tomb : " A time will come," it said, " when your impetuous nature will reveal itself, and you will find it difficult to remain faithful to Jesus. Oh ! then remember your name, and choose rather to die than cease to be immaculate." " Oh ! mother, mother, watch over me," said the weeping girl, as she came to the close ; " how true was all you said, and how guilty I was near becoming by forgetting you. Watch over me, and intercede for me with Jesus, that I may have strength to prevent the dark deed I have nearly been the cause of. Oh ! Mary, mother of mercy speak to their hearts, and speak to mine ; let me not carry through life the remorse of theirs and my guilt." She heard her father come home ; then all was silent again ; five o'clock struck, and she descended to the garden ; the little door was open.

"Are you there, Paul? Give me your arm, I can hardly see."

"Here I am, miss; lor' love you, why you haven't gone to bed at all, you be dressed just as you were last night, and you've no bonnet on; you'll catch cold, miss."

"Oh! Paul, I had so much to think of, I could neither sleep nor undress, but you see I have a warm cloak on; put the hood over my head, Paul: now I'm quite comfortable." And they went on to the corner of the road, the poor girl shivering, notwithstanding her assertion, and the faded flowers dropping one by one from her ball dress, as if in mockery of the grave and anxious feelings which prompted her onwards.

CHAPTER IX.

WHEN Mrs. Irvington bid good night to her friends, she sought vainly for her son to accompany her home from the ball, and on her return she was surprised to see already a light in his room; but it was her custom to exercise no control over his actions, for, wayward as he was, she had reason to be much pleased with his affectionate conduct towards herself. She, consequently, did not inquire at what hour he had returned; but, after offering up her nightly prayer, that Providence might watch over her boy and bring him one day to the light of faith, she retired to rest. Oh! how much needed was prayer for George that night, and how much the sigh of the Christian mother had weighed, perhaps, in the balance of God.

George sat up, writing a farewell, full of feeling, to the mother who had performed to him the part of both parents. He knew not what explanation to give for the engagement he might perhaps fall in; the fault, he thought, lay not on his side. Fain would he have penned a word of tenderness to the girl who had replaced Immacolata in his heart, and for whom he had imagined James entertained a similar, but not a favoured, affection. He had, however, never opened his mind to her,—and could he at the moment of, perhaps, bidding farewell to life, disturb her peace of mind? He sealed his letter,

put it in a drawer where it could not immediately be found, and flung himself, ready dressed, upon the bed.

James O'Sullivan arrived at the rendezvous with his seconds ; he looked at his watch, he was a quarter of an hour before the time. His friends chose a level spot and paced it ; he stood looking on, firm, and repelling thoughts which flashed painfully through his mind. He heard the sound of carriage-wheels ; they stopped ; he knew it was his opponent, and steadily awaited him. A surprised and angry exclamation from the seconds obliged him to turn round ; the carriage-door had been opened by an old man, who lowered the steps, and respectfully offered his arm to a slight figure enveloped in a cloak : it was a lady. She walked, with trembling steps, to the spot where James stood, threw back the hood which disguised her features, and there, with the passing flush of excitement on a countenance worn out by exhaustion, with the flowery crown still fastened on her dishevelled hair, beautiful in her very disorder, queenlike and modest in her movements, stood before him Immacolata. Each gazed at the other in dismay ; the seconds came up and inquired the meaning of this apparition. James, recovering from his embarrassed position, requested them to withdraw to a little distance.

"And now, Miss Falconer," he said, "how came you to hear of this ?" His manner, always so formal with her, had a tone of severity in it which overawed her ; she forgot all the words she had so anxiously prepared. "Who sent you here ?" he asked.

"No one ! Who, think you, has a right to command me, Mr. O'Sullivan ?"

"I beg pardon, Miss Falconer; but the fact of your extraordinary appearance here coincides most strangely with the delay of my opponent."

"And what have I to do with Mr. Irvington?"

"*You!*" said James, with a bitter smile.

"Speak, sir; I do not understand you."

"I will speak, then, Miss Falconer, as you wish it. *You!*—have you not influenced George and broken the bond between him and my sister? have you not spoiled her happiness, for she is constant and true? Her love was that of a life—not the idle coquetry of a passing hour. Poor Ellen! yet you call yourself her friend, and you have been cruel thus far."

Immacolata hid her face in her hands.

"I do not deserve such language, Mr. O'Sullivan; I came with intentions which will un-deceive you."

"I beg pardon in having spoken thus freely; but the motive which has prompted me to this encounter . . . the approaching hour, which will probably be my last——"

"It shall not be," she exclaimed.

"I see my adversary in the distance. Miss Falconer, this is not a fit place for you. Allow me to accompany you back to your carriage."

"Leave me," she said, regaining her composure; and, turning round to George, who had stopped behind,—"*Come nearer, Mr. Irvington; you recognize me, do you not?*"

The young man looked at the other, then at the seconds, then at the young lady again, and seemed wonderfully puzzled.

"I am here," she resumed, "of my own accord and free will, unknown to my father, or any one

of our friends. I heard involuntarily last night of your foolish appointment for this morning, and conceived the idea of coming here to ask of you both, in God's name, to reflect ere you commit a crime. Providence has brought me safely thus far. Oh! let me not have come in vain; let me obtain from you both a promise that you will remember the feelings you once cherished for each other, and that neither of you will spill the blood of the friend of his boyhood. What can have prompted you to such madness, which can only end in covering one or the other of you with guilt? Thus, hardly tolerated even by human laws, can the survivor of his friend ever look upon his family again? Oh, in the name of those who love you! each of you has a mother who will bear with her to the grave the pain of his loss or the misery of his guilty bloodshed. In their name, in the name of Ellen, who is dear to you both, desist, and return with me, unsullied by a crime."

The young men listened to her with downcast eyes; her natural eloquence spoke to their hearts. She felt her influence, and, approaching James, —because the reproachful terms in which he had spoken to her rendered her action more generous, —she held out her hand to him. "Say the word, Mr. O'Sullivan; tell me I have saved Ellen's brother."

"I can only speak for myself," he said.

"Mr. Irvington, in the name of your mother and of Ellen, give me your promise."

"I think," said the young man, looking at her with unfeigned admiration, "there is some mistake. I have nothing against James, and I have been rejected by Miss O'Sullivan."

"Is it possible?" exclaimed James.

"Word and honour; ask her, if you like. She told me politely last night I might go about my business."

"George, I was too hasty;—I can't say that either, for it was a feeling of some standing; but I thought I had a motive. I provoked you, and I'm sorry for it. There's a fine fellow! I must say I thought you'd a screw loose, but couldn't help it. James, there's my hand. We must call these gentlemen to witness all's over; but, first, let us take Miss Falconer away," and he offered her his arm.

"Bless me!" exclaimed James, "you have been standing in the wet grass all this time in satin shoes and your ball-dress."

"Oh! never mind," she said; "I will go to bed the moment I go home. Thank you, both of you," she said, as she took her place in the carriage and held out a hand to each; "you have made me very happy."

"Miss Falconer," said James, retaining her hand, "I never knew you before,—I value you now. May I solicit your friendship?"

"Oh!" she replied, smiling, "you are Ellen's brother; is that not enough?"

"Let me be more, admirable Immacolata; let me be your friend. My sister's bright example ought to have sufficed to keep me always in the right. Permit me, henceforth, to look up also to you."

"Let us look higher, Mr. O'Sullivan. You are a Catholic: let us pray for each other, that, after having experienced our weakness, we may rise stronger, and trust to the love of our heavenly Father. Mr. Irvington, you have too good a

mother for you to remain long a Protestant. Let us thank God that a mighty grief has been spared her. Farewell! What has passed between us this morning we will look upon as passed beyond the grave, and remember it only silently to thank God."

She waved her hand to them and sank back, cold and shivering, in the carriage. A few minutes after, the firing of pistols in the air and a cheerful huzzah announced to her there was nothing more to fear.

"I say, Jim," said George, "as they returned together, "what kind of speech was it you made that girl? Haven't you been in love with her this some time back?"

"I! not at all. I have been most rude to her, and have always disliked her till this morning."

"Bless my stars! wasn't it for her we quarrelled, then?"

"Never dreamed of her."

"Ho! ho! ho! 'tis the best joke extant; she is, though, a deuced fine girl."

"I can never find fault with her again, you may suppose, George."

"My sister Ellen used to say she was a very religious girl, and purposed entering a convent. I thought my sister mistaken; but one cannot always make out what young ladies have their minds upon, and Elly herself——"

He stopped, as if some disagreeable thought had occurred to him.

"You're thinking it odd that Ellen should have huffed me: I thought so myself; but some things are best let alone. Let us tread on less dangerous ground."

They returned to the light talk of their daily

life, their prospects of amusement for the day and the morrow ; but a feeling of seriousness and gratitude was at the bottom of their conversation, and when they passed the threshold of their respective homes, they had exchanged a hearty shake of the hand and a faithful promise of renewed friendship.

CHAPTER X.

It was a motley spectacle that which was presented at the breakfast-table in Ivy Cottage. Some of the guests had slept over-night, and, having no other clothes but their ball-dresses, looked rather uncomfortable; many young ladies, unwilling to show their hair in disorder, were fain to put on some of Mrs. O'Sullivan's morning caps; all the juvenile faces looked very pale, and hardly any one could do honour to the hospitable breakfast-table, which was provided with manifold comforts, hot and cold. The gentlemen, however, enjoyed themselves thoroughly, and many a joke was passed on their fair companions and good-humouredly received. The tea-urn had ceased to hiss, and breakfast was nearly over, when Ellen made her appearance, equipped as if for a walk.

"My dear girl," exclaimed her mother, "I thought you were still asleep."

"Oh, dear mamma, I ought to have wished you good morning long ago; but I was so anxious about Ima: I went over to see her, and she looks very ill."

"What is the matter with her?"

"I don't know. Mr. Falconer sent for the doctor, but he has not yet arrived; she is much flushed, and yet shivers; she seemed glad to see me, but she speaks so strangely."

"I will go and see her. Have some breakfast, my love."

Ellen took off her bonnet and sat down, exchanging morning salutations with all the party present, who inquired about Miss Falconer, and grieved to hear of her indisposition. During the remainder of the morning she had to keep the guests company, but they all dispersed long before dinner-time, and she availed herself of the opportunity to return to her friend. She was running out at the garden-door, when her brother's voice called her back.

"I have not seen you to-day, Elly."

"Whose fault, lazy brother? Who was it lay in bed all day?"

"Nay, sister, not quite so bad; I overslept myself this morning, but then I had been disturbed by such hideous dreams."

"I am going to Immacolata's; do you know she is ill!"

"You don't mean to say so."

"Yes; I've not seen her since morning; but mamma says she looks to have pleurisy and high fever."

"Poor girl! she caught cold, no wonder!"

"Where? oh, you mean last night; she did not look well all the evening, and left early."

"I'll go in with you, dear, and see Mr. Falconer. Poor girl! God grant it may be stopped in time!"

They had reached the door of Laburnham Cottage; Ellen, without making any inquiry, ran up to the sick girl's room; an old man was coming down stairs; Ellen looked at him and recognized the gardener of the convent. "Paul," she called out, "is it you, Paul? Oh, yes, I knew you had slept here last night; how do you do? it is very long since I saw you last."

"Thank you, miss; you're very good;" and, passing the back of his hand on his eyes, "I beg pardon, miss, for not knowing you at once; I've been seeing Miss Falconer. I came into town yesterday, and am going home now. She sent me word I must go into her room to bid her good-bye, for she had something particular to say to me."

"How is she, Paul?"

"Oh, miss, she's only a flower; she'll hold up her head soon again, but one's always afraid of seeing such delicate young things take ill; you're going to her, miss."

"Yes; good-bye, Paul," and she left him.

James had stopped on hearing his sister's voice, and he recognized Immacolata's guide of the morning; each looked at the other in surprise.

"Ah, sir," said the old man, breaking in at once on the subject nearest his thoughts; "we know the cause; I'll never forgive myself if harm comes to her; that grass was so wet, and she so lightly clad."

"The fault is not yours," said James; "I have much more to answer for; but how is she? have you seen her?"

"Far from well: I knew her since she's that high; brought her up almost, if I may make bold to say so. I'm Paul, the gardener, and she was the Convent Flower, so she trusted to me, and told me as how two gentlemen, friends of hers, you know, sir, what they were about to do, and God had put it into her little heart to save them; I wouldn't hear of it at first, but she said it would be the death of her if she hadn't her way. I listened to her, God forgive me! She told me just now she was thankful and happy, and made me promise

again that I would never tell what she did this morning, poor dear! I hope I'm not doing wrong again in keeping that secret; I assure you, sir, it's very difficult for a poor old fellow like me to know what to do; I've been forty years out of the world, sir, and know very little of its ways."

"And, perhaps, you are all the wiser for that, my worthy old friend; I hope we have no cause to be seriously uneasy about Miss Falconer; keep the secret she entrusted to you; to her and to you I owe much, and I shall not forget it. Paul, remember me whenever you want a friend." So saying, he slipped something into the old man's hand, and repaired to the apartment on the ground-floor, which he knew to be occupied by Mr. Falconer.

Ellen found her friend much oppressed, and breathing with difficulty; her eyes were closed; she stooped down, and kissed her forehead.

"Are you alone, Elly?" she whispered.

"Yes, dear; do you want anything?"

"I want to speak to you."

Ellen bent over her, and the sick girl uttered words she could not conclude, but which brought tears to the eyes of both.

"Ima, say no more, I wish you had told me before that this was on your mind, for I would then have assured you how entirely I had forgotten it; let us think of yourself alone; for the present you must have repose; I'll stay by you, but so quietly that you may sleep as much as you like, and never open your lips if you don't feel inclined."

They remained a few minutes with their hands locked one in another, then Immacolata turned round—"Will you read something to me, Elly?"

"I'm afraid of tiring you, love."

"No! this won't; look on that table," she said, showing her a pocket-book she had left there the night before; "I want to remember mamma, and my head is getting so confused——" Ellen understood, and taking from the folds of the book a letter which she had often seen, she knelt down as if for a holy duty, and in a low voice, read to Immacolata the precious advice left to her by her dying parent. The young girl listened; her countenance beamed with satisfaction, and when her friend had ceased, she remained silent, with her eyes raised in prayer, apparently in intense communication with her mother above; then a strange smile played on her features, she looked happy and composed; from that time she hardly spoke again; the symptoms of her malady became more and more alarming, and although every one spoke encouragingly to her, she smiled and shook her head. Day after day brought increasing fears to Miss Falconer's friends; on the eighth day from that on which she had gone to bed, the doctor called Mr. O'Sullivan out, and told him they might fear the worst.

"Must I prepare her father, then, doctor; must we, do you think, give up all hope?"

"I dare not say much, sir; youth has in itself resources which often baffle disease and even science: if she pass this night, her complaint may take a turn, but I can do no more for her."

Mr. O'Sullivan thanked him for the conscientious statement, and returned to the house, where he communicated the sad intelligence to his wife, and endeavoured to prepare Mr. Falconer for the heavy blow, although leaving him much hope. It was melancholy to see that pretty home, so lately

a picture of domestic comfort, now thronged with sympathizing friends, and every countenance bearing the presentiment of a coming affliction. Not a sound was heard all over it; every one spoke in whispered accents, every tread was soft and hushed, and the shutters closed as if death had already fallen upon its eldest born. James O'Sullivan and George had come backwards and forwards often; both were full of anxiety, and could only communicate to each other the subject of their remorse and dread. Towards evening, Mr. Falconer's distress of mind became so poignant that he had to be removed from the room; then everything grew so still that the hours were heard striking down stairs at the family clock; every half-hour they seemed to bring to the sick room a sound full of melancholy inquiry: Was she alive still—she whose years they had numbered so joyfully in the past?—Were they to record her dissolution or her return to life?—were they to chime of hopes or fears?—Was it a mockery to the anxious watchers their silvery voice, full of sweet memories, and which never yet in that house had marked the hour of sorrow?

Immacolata had been quiet and motionless all day; Ellen was by her side kneeling and praying in silence; she had nerved herself, she said, for her duty, and would not leave her friend all night. Mrs. O'Sullivan remonstrated with her in vain; Ellen, so gentle at all times, would hearken to no one now. Evening closed in; the lamp that burnt in a corner of the room grew more and more vivid in the coming darkness. Ellen felt her friend press her hand, and ask in a whisper:—"Am I worse?"

The poor girl felt as if her heart would break; she knew not what answer to make, and called her mother.

"Mrs. O'Sullivan," said Immacolata, "I can't see; are you there? oh, take care of me; if I'm very ill, I don't feel it though, let me have the sacraments, papa will give me leave."

"Immacolata, dear child, that I have loved as if you were my own, is it your wish, and will it not frighten you?"

"Oh, no! I am not afraid of Our Blessed Lord; tell papa death has no fears for a Catholic."

"You speak much more freely, dear child, you look more like yourself; I think it needless to alarm your dear father."

"I do indeed feel as if something that pained me had gone; is the doctor there?"

"No, dear, he will come later."

"I should like to know how I am; pray send for my confessor, he will see if I am ill enough."

"Certainly, my love, he called here to-day, but you were asleep; I will send word to him directly." She moved gently away from the room; at the door she found Mr. Falconer kneeling against a chair, and his lips moving as if in prayer; she whispered to him,—*"Ima looks better."*

The unhappy father gazed at her as if he did not understand; she repeated the words: he clasped her hands, and his pent-up feelings found vent in tears. "She has expressed a wish," she continued, "to see our friend Mr. Baroni."

"In God's name let her slightest wish be complied with at once; send for him or whosoever she likes; oh, I am too happy," and he sank back on his chair.

Mrs. O'Sullivan went down stairs; the first

person she met was her son: "Call the servant to go a message, James."

"For what, dear mother?"

"To fetch Mr. Baroni."

"My God! is she so much worse, then?"

"No! on the contrary, I have hope."

"Thank God! thank God! oh! mother, I'll go myself and bring him back the sooner." Without saying another word he rushed out, and never stopped until he reached the priest's door.

The Rev. Mr. Baroni needed no impulse to obey the summons directly; very zealous in the discharge of all his duties, he was deeply interested in the spiritual welfare of that family, where the eye of faith showed him a Protestant father to be brought to truth by the prayers and virtues of his innocent child. He followed James, and was taken up at once to the sick chamber. All left the room as he entered it; he knelt down, prayed silently; then rising, blessed the sick girl, and took a chair by her bed-side: "Have you aught that makes you uneasy, daughter?" he asked, in her native tongue.

"Father, is it wrong to wish to die?" she asked tremulously.

"Certainly! life and death are in God's hands, and we ought to accept either, as it is His holy will to send us; but what have you to harbour such an imprudent wish?"

"I had hoped," she said, and her eyes beamed with a holy radiance, "I had offered the sacrifice of my life to God, and asked him in return that He would call my father to the light of faith; I was glad to feel worse, for I thought my prayer had been heard, but I know not what has come over me, it seems as if I had been oppressed by

a heavy sleep, and only awoke from it just now ; I am better I think, father."

The holy priest was silent, he seemed to implore light from above ; then his austere features relaxed, and, with a deep feeling which gave to his language something mysterious, like the sanctuary near which he dwelt,—“ Daughter,” he said, “ fear no more ; the angel of death has passed over you, but has left on you no sign ; your prayer was imprudent, and has not been heard ; yet, its motive was not displeasing to God, take from His hands the life He has restored to you ; let it be purified by holy resolves, sanctified by the desire to please Him, and offered to obtain for your dear father the grace you so much desire and hope ; for Jesus, who has done much for you, will accomplish greater things still.” He rose as if to depart, but she made the sign of the cross, and he understood the spiritual aid she required from him : he bent his head and listened to her confession ; a few minutes after he had left the room and sought Mr. Falconer. “ Take courage,” he said, “ my experience in the sick is of long standing ; a happy crisis has come for your daughter, she is saved.”

The news was quickly spread, yet anxiety still kept Immacolata’s friends watching at the cottage all night, and it was not till next morning that Ellen and her mother retired from the bedside where the young girl was enjoying a refreshing sleep. They passed the door of the Catholic chapel.

“ Shall we hear Mass in thanksgiving, dear mamma ? ” said Ellen.

“ My love, you are too exhausted.”

“ Well ! only a little prayer, then, mamma.”

They entered and went at once to Mary's altar : a young man was kneeling in the place which Immacolata generally occupied ; Ellen passed before him, looked, and her heart bounded with joy, in recognising her brother. James had neglected the practices of Catholicism for years ; it was the first time since his return home that he knelt at those altars he had loved as a boy : was it Ellen's prayers or Immacolata's suffering that had called down grace on his heart ? There was a torch expiring in the morning light ; it had burned all night by Mary's altar ; lit by that holy faith which speaks to the senses as well as to the soul, which the simple-minded understand most clearly, and to which genius must bow with humility. Blessed doctrine which makes itself all to all, and brings to the heart the fruits of the Holy Spirit, which are light, peace, and joy.

CHAPTER XI.

A FORTNIGHT elapsed, and Immacolata was able to leave her bed of sickness, and sit a few hours a day at her open window, and as the fresh air passed over her pale features, she inhaled with it strength, and the delightful feeling of returning health. It is so sweet to look upon the face of nature when we had thought to see it no more; so enchanting to the young to feel life open to us again, when we had cast a near and shuddering glance into the tomb. Another month, and she had resumed her former occupations, and was to be seen in the garden, and even took short walks, leaning on her father or on Ellen. One day she had been expecting the latter to go out with her, when a message came that Miss O'Sullivan was unexpectedly detained at home, and she resolved to try her strength alone. She went out on the high road, and after descending the sloping path which led to Ivy Cottage, she sat down to rest under a tree; she had not been there a minute when she heard steps coming up, and George Irvington accosted her with an exclamation of surprise. "I sincerely rejoice, Miss Falconer, at seeing you so far well again; believe me, none heard of your illness with more sorrow than myself."

"I thank you," she said, "you are very kind," and she rose as if to go on.

"Miss Falconer, wait a little; it is the first

time I have been able to speak to you since that dreadful morning, and——”

“I begged of you never to allude to it.”

“Nor have I ever breathed a word of it, but with James; although fain would I have held up to every one your admirable generosity; let me speak to you,” he continued; “sit down one moment longer.”

“I must take care, I cannot stay out long.”

“Do not avoid me,” he continued, in an imploring tone; “listen to me this once, Miss Falconer; in the apprehension I was in on your account, in the suffering of my mind, which amounted almost to agony; in the anxious watch I kept morning and night at the door of your house, looking forward to hear the first and last news of you for the day,—in all this, recognize, I beseech you, more than a natural feeling, more even than the remembrance of your heroism, and grief for having occasioned your illness. I felt so much, because I dared to love you much; will you permit me to say it at last?”

She covered her face with her hands; both were much moved, but she recovered the first.

“Mr. Irvington, I would say leave me at once, but I have no right to feign indignation; I have deserved what I hear from you, it is my own fault, but I will endeavour to atone.” She uncovered her face; her features were compressed, although her colour had risen high. “Hear me, in your turn: in the first place, Mr. Irvington, were not your words the expression of a feeling which will soon pass away, I would say to you, speak not to me of love, for I have none to give you in return; Immacolata Falconer can be the bride of Heaven alone!”

"Permit me to ask——"

"It is needless; your question would be as unintelligible to me as my answer to you; to the Catholic heart alone is conceded the privilege of placing her love on high; Christ calls the soul sometimes to a union which is not of earth, and to that would I aspire. Perhaps I have not been faithful enough hitherto to the divine call, but God has forgiven me, and will assist me: you see I am very open with you as to myself, Mr. Irvington, I may therefore speak of you. Have you a right to address me in terms which Ellen alone ought to hear from you? Are you not engaged to her?"

"We were so sacredly, but Miss O'Sullivan has broken off from me of her own accord."

"Do not believe it, her attachment to you is unalterable; she thought you had changed your mind, and wished to set you at liberty; you do not know us, Mr. Irvington; we women never forget, much as is said and sung to the contrary; but you, oh! how little do you prize your happiness, in flinging it away! how little do you appreciate Ellen's true and noble heart! Return to your former sentiments towards her, and be a sharer in the friendship I bear her; we have met in strange incidents, let me carry away a hope I have contributed to your happiness, and it will be to me a pleasant remembrance. Will you think over our conversation?"

"Very long and very often."

"Then forget me; think of me only as the friend of your destined wife, and under any other denomination, farewell! Will you be so good as to take me home, for I do not feel well enough to go to Ellen's, as I purposed doing; will you take

a message from me? Tell her I feel tired, and am going to lie on my bed, and that I would rather she did not come to see me to-day. Go, Mr. Irvington, take advantage of the opportunity."

She withdrew into her house, and did not appear again, even at dinner time; but had her message been ill-delivered or misunderstood? Towards evening, although her door had remained closed, a voice came which would not be refused; it implored and obtained admittance. Ellen flew into her arms, and blushing, amid smiles and tears, told her her marriage was fixed for that day month.

CHAPTER XII.

It was seven in the morning; the Rev. Mr. Baroni was in his garden, reciting the office preparatory to offering up Mass, when he was interrupted by the announcement of a visit. Supposing, from the earliness of the hour, that it was a call to a dying person he closed his book and hastened to prepare for the summons, when, on the visitor being introduced, it proved to be no other than George Irvington: "I am come to have a long and serious talk with you, sir."

"I am happy to hear that is all; I received you in some trepidation, fearing to hear of your mother or some of the party being ill; but, as it is only a friendly call, will you come up-stairs?"

The young man followed, and was introduced into a neatly-furnished drawing-room, devoid of ornaments, save some religious pictures copied from the best masters by an able hand. It was the first time he visited the place or its owner, but he was so taken up with the subject he came upon, that without any preliminary conversation he put his chair very close to the good priest, and, in a low voice, as if afraid of being overheard, spoke earnestly, seriously, and for a considerable length of time. When he had done, Mr. Baroni took his hand, and, with the greatest sympathy, said, "Are you quite sure, my dear young friend, that you know your mind?"

"I am afraid, sir," replied George, holding up his head, "that you have a very poor opinion of me."

"I might plead as excuse that you have not afforded me an opportunity of cultivating your acquaintance, and consequently I am not aware whether you are more constant in your pursuits than most young people of your age. Pleasing as is your request to me, I must ask whether you wish to study Catholicism; be not actuated by motives of curiosity, for to know the light once, and not to follow it, would be no longer an involuntary error. We must weigh all things. I have the highest opinion of your courage as a man, Mr. Irvington; but, do you feel yourself endowed with that degree of moral courage which completes the hero? Thank God! the trials of Catholics have lessened now-a-days; a man's belief is no longer an obstacle to his advancement, but there are minor trials which you will find hard to bear. Will you love your new faith sufficiently, think you, to stand by it amongst the jeers of a thoughtless world? Can you stem against the torrent of bad example, and remain faithful to the strict precepts of the religion you purpose to embrace?" The venerable man remained silent.

"Well, sir," said George, "I see that, instead of your talking me over, it's I who must try and talk you in; don't try me, I'm quite determined. The fact is, I see you're surprised at my hurry and wish to study religion; but the fact is, I'm going to be married."

"Ha!" said the priest, with a grave smile.

"Yes, sir; I was near making a sad mistake about that matter, too, but I settled it last night,

clearly and irrevocably, with my old friend Ellen O'Sullivan."

"Indeed; oh, then, I wish you joy, Mr. Irvington, with all my heart; she is a priceless girl."

"That's just my opinion of her, sir, I'm glad to hear you confirm it; well, then, had I no other motive than the fact of my marrying Ellen, it would be quite sufficient to make me turn a Catholic. I have seen enough of mixed marriages to know how unhappy they often turn out; how often, as a child, have I seen my dear mother perform her devotions in secret, going in lonely sadness to her church, although she longed to take me with her, afraid almost to pray before her boy, lest it should be supposed she wanted to change his religion; and, although my father respected her principles, how many obstacles did that difference of religion bring to mutual confidence! I have heard my dear mother tell me since that her married life had been a sad one from that only cause. Now, sir, there must not be the slightest difference between Ellen and me; what she believes I will believe, what she wishes to teach her family I will be the first to practise; oh, sir, the virtue of Ellen and Miss Falconer is sufficient to make one love their religion; will you teach me, sir, or shall I turn a Catholic by myself?"

The good priest clasped his hands, raised his eyes to heaven, and murmured a prayer which the young man knew not, but which from the fervour of expression seemed to be an ardent thanksgiving to God. "My dear young friend," he resumed, and, turning to George, he found his eyes wonderingly fixed upon himself, "you cannot yet understand the effusion of my joy,

because you do not know the value of the treasure you seek. God forbid that I should retard your happiness for a single moment; Jesus longs to call you to his fold, prompted thereto by the love of His own Sacred Heart, by the imploring tears of your mother, by the long and ardent prayers of your bride. I will begin at once and expound to you the divine word of God. I am going at present to say Mass, I need not say I shall offer it for you; I will choose some books for you which I shall send to your house to-day, and you will come back to talk to me at any hour you feel inclined. For the present, good-bye; let us pray, that the light of the Holy Spirit may descend on us both, that He may give unction and grace to my failing voice, and to your heart the fervour of generous youth, and the perseverance that crowneth all."

"I am much obliged to you, sir," said the young man, taking his proffered hand, "do you think I can go with you to the chapel? Would it be orthodox to begin so soon?"

"Thank God, there could be no better commencement; we will unite in prayer then. Oh! how happy this good news will make your mother. I must withdraw to prepare for the Holy Sacrifice; until we meet again, farewell!

George descended the staircase with a light step, crossed the road, and went into the chapel; under the doorway he met Ellen. "Could you lend me that prayer-book?" he asked. She gave it at once, evidently much surprised.

"Can you do without it?" he continued.

"Oh, yes!" and she looked for an explanation; but he entered the church resolutely, waited for her to pass, then kneeling at a little distance from

her, he closely copied her movements when she rose or knelt. When the holy sacrifice was over he returned the book to her, and silently and respectfully walked out.

That day she did not meet him again, nor did George Irvington for several days renew his visits at Ivy Cottage; his mother called alone, and said George was shut up in his room all day, yet his health and his spirits were good; she did not know what to make of him. She seemed to await for Ellen to explain this change, but Ellen was silent. Every morning at Mass she laid her prayer-book on a chair at a little distance from hers, and silently poured out her own heart before God: it was so full, she needed no exterior help. One morning the little manual was not brought back to her, she felt some one was waiting for her, but without turning round to look, she rose and left the church. She had hardly reached the door, when George was by her side:—

“Have you understood, Ellen——?” he asked.

“I don’t know; I’m afraid to hope.”

“Don’t, Ellen, you’re right, I am a Catholic.” She burst into tears.

“Why are you distressed, Ellen?”

“Oh no! I am too happy: I never hoped for so much!”

“We shall be married by Mr. Baroni, Ellen, in this church; there will be no Protestant minister required now; we shall receive communion at the same altar, and continue to practise religion through life, for I’m a Catholic in earnest, and you must make me, Ellen, as good as you.”

“Oh, Mr. Irvington! God knows I prize your attachment, yet I would willingly have sacrificed it to purchase for you the great blessing of faith,

and now to think the Almighty has heard all, all my prayers ! ”

“ You are a good intercessor, then, Ellen ; I shall take care you know all my wants and wishes : happy the house on which you will draw down a blessing ! Good-bye ; I see you are at present too much affected to walk home, remain here and compose yourself : I will come and see you often now that my studies are over ; good bye, God bless you ! ”

Ellen returned to the altar of the Blessed Virgin, where she had often put up her petitions, and there wept long and uncontrolled. She thought she was quite alone, but when her emotion had somewhat subsided, and she rose to depart, Immacolata emerged from behind a pillar, and laid her hand on her arm. “ Let me lean on you to go home,” she said, “ I feel so weak.” As they walked out together, Ellen began with,—

“ Ima, I am glad to meet you, I have so much to say ! ”

“ I know it all,” she said ; “ happy Ellen, thank God ! I have only my father to pray for now.”

Ellen turned to her with a look of unspeakable gratitude ; but she knew not all, she knew not that George’s conversion and her own happiness were the first fruits of Immacolata’s sacrifice ; the suffering girl had offered herself to God for those she loved, and sorrow could visit them no more.

Mysteries of intercessory prayer ! fathomless in their effects, because they rise from the deep-seated source of Catholic charity. Happy those, who experience them ! happier far those whose life has been devoted to the solemn and silent work. Their kingdom is not of this world ! they reign over souls, the trials of life cannot affect

them; they sow in tears, but they know it is to reap in joy. To them are reserved the mysterious joys of self-sacrifice; to them the fulfilling what is wanting to the passion of Christ: not that the Divine Immolation could be incomplete, but that in order to communicate its fruits to men, there are some to whom is reserved the privilege of serving as channels to His graces: those whose hearts are kindled like His, with the fire He came to light upon earth—the fire of a mighty love which rends, yet unites, twofold in its object, yet concentrating in one mighty focus God and its neighbour.

Immacolata's repentance had purified her anew; she was more firm, more humble, less reliant on herself, than before, and therefore still dearer to Him who loves the humble and meek of heart. Her beautiful features were unchanged by her short illness, but they wore another expression: she had grown more silent, more thoughtful; she seemed to have found a quiet, interior source of happiness, and her heart was at rest.

She recovered, and only a slight cough remained to tell of her late illness; there was a vivid colour on her cheek—the sign of renewed health, she told her friends; but as the season advanced, and the falling leaves told of autumn's return, Immacolata's cough became more deep; the hectic flush had spoken true—her lungs were affected; a complaint of the chest had fastened on her, which must be checked at once; the doctor advised a change of climate. Immacolata heard the decision with dread: England had been the home of her father, of her friends, and of her own happy days; nor could she retain for Italy other feelings but those associated with her mother's memory and

her religion. But she saw her father's anxiety—she knew her own imprudence had injured her constitution—and she consented. Immediate preparations were made for a journey to Nice, which was to take place immediately after Ellen's marriage.

This news gave great grief to her friends: to the poor in the village, who owed much to her charity, the young lady's ill-health was a subject of great sympathy, and her approaching departure a great sorrow. None, however, felt so deeply interested in the sick girl as George Irvington and James: to them her declining health had been a subject of continual self-reproach. James's manner to her was so altered, so full of respectful sympathy, that Ellen, unable to comprehend the change, was pleased to see her brother come round to her opinion, and once or twice laughed pleasantly at his fickleness.

"Hush, Elly!" he replied; "I know her now; I had wronged her much!"

"What a change! James, take care, no one ever knew Ima that was not fascinated."

"Elly," he said with a look of pained seriousness, "I am fascinated, but not as you suppose; God forbid! I would no more think of touching the lamp which burns before the altar, than of aspiring to love that girl; I cannot tell you all I know of her,—painful as it is to me to keep a secret from you. You called her 'the convent flower' at school?"

"Yes; don't you think it a pretty name?"

"More than that, it is symbolical; flowers are holy things, it is said by those who have made nature their study; they are not only beautiful,

but raise our hearts on high; Immacolata has done this for me. The 'convent flower' has sown seeds, Elly, which will bear, in time."

The young girl did not press him further; there was a strange smile on his features, which she remembered in later years.

CHAPTER XIII.

MERRILY the bells chimed, at an early hour on a fine morning in autumn, at the Catholic chapel in the village of * * *. The altar was decked with flowers, the ground strewn with fresh leaves and the last blossoms of the season. Two seats, covered with white satin, occupied the first places, and behind these several rows of chairs seemed to await a numerous congregation.

The candles were lighted for the Holy Sacrifice, and the priest who was to celebrate knelt in his white alb on the steps of the altar, imploring Heaven's blessing on the union he was about to consecrate.

The appointed hour struck, and all the Catholic villagers thronged the hitherto empty church, and awaited, at a respectful distance, the coming of the bride. A carriage stopped at the door, and the bridegroom descended alone. He wore the uniform of a naval officer, and many looked at him with surprise as he knelt down on the chair prepared for him, and, with all the exterior signs of Catholic piety, awaited the approaching ceremony. Not even when the rustling of silks and the thronging of the congregation announced the entrance of the bridal party, did George look back; but when he heard them very near, he rose, and bowed to Ellen, leaning on the arm of her father. Mr. O'Sullivan handed his daughter to her chair and withdrew. The first bridesmaid

then came and knelt near her ; Ellen and Immacolata were again side by side in that important act, as they had been so many times in life.

Both had adopted the French style of dress for this occasion, and Ellen wore the lace veil and orange-flowers, which, in France, can never touch but the forehead of a bride. Her mother knelt at the side of the altar, that she might gaze on the face of her child. Immacolata was attired in white, the faithful convent flower serving as the only ornament to her simple dress: it was the last flower her tree bore for that year.

None but happy faces were to be seen at this wedding,—not even Mrs. O'Sullivan shed a tear. She had every hope of not being parted from her darling child, who would remain with her when young Irvington set out on his voyages.

The Holy Sacrifice commenced, and when the moment arrived for conferring the nuptial benediction, Mr. Baroni descended the steps of the altar, and, from the fulness of his heart, addressed an appropriate discourse to the young couple over whose destinies Providence had watched in such a special manner, in order to blend them into one at the feet of that altar.

"Thank God," he said to the young wife in concluding,—“thank God that He has deigned to fortify with an extraordinary grace the heart on which you are henceforth to lean. Thank Him, every day of your life, that one Faith is to unite you, and you may, hand in hand, walk in the one path which leads to happiness.”

He raised his hand, and the blessing which has blessed so many generations descended on their espousals, in the name of the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, and the gold ring was placed

by George on the finger of Ellen, and he promised to love her as Christ loves His church.

All the assistants had joined in a fervent prayer; all eyes were fixed on the young people; but Immacolata veiled her face with her hands. She alone, of all the persons present, wept. Was it a parting sigh she gave to a happiness she must never know, and which would have been so fully appreciated by her affectionate heart? Was it a passing regret that she had sacrificed all earthly love when it had been offered to her? Was it a dread at the life she had marked out for herself,—a life of lonely and daily self-denial? She trembled.

“Sursum Corda!” said the voice of the priest at the altar.

She obeyed the summons. She raised her heart on high, and felt it conquered by a mighty love. All was over! she had fought her last combat at the foot of that altar; she never felt the struggle more.

When she looked up, the ceremony was over: George was standing. Ellen passed her arm in his, and all the party proceeded to the sacristy. Ellen first received her mother’s long and silent embrace; Mrs. Irvington was at hand to greet her with the name of daughter. “I feel,” she said, “as if this were too much happiness for me to live and look on.”

“Nay, mammy,” exclaimed George; “no one must talk of going to heaven for the present. Dear Miss Falconer, you have not yet paid homage to my bride.”

Ellen advanced to kiss her friend; but George was detaining her, and, speaking to her in a low voice,—“May I,” he repeated, “may I tell her all?”

"I have no right to exact that any secret should be kept from your wife."

"Noble-minded girl! here she is, Ellen; embrace her; thank her that I am alive, and your husband."

"Don't be alarmed, dear Ellen, at the nonsense he seems inclined to talk: this happy event seems to be disturbing his reason. I wish you joy as Mrs. Irvington, dear friend. I am the first to give you that name."

"Thank you, Immacolata, thank you, dear."

Ellen could hardly speak, but she looked as happy as she felt, and that was the best answer to all congratulations.

The marriage certificate being signed, all proceeded to the *déjeuner*, which was prepared at Ivy Cottage.

When George and his pretty bride descended from their carriage, he continued talking to her in a low voice. He seemed to be detailing circumstances of great import, for she was pale and breathless, and walked on into the house, hardly seeming to know where she went. When her bridesmaid came to meet her,—“Wont you look at me?” she said, smiling at their abstraction.

The sound of her voice aroused Ellen. “Oh, Immacolata!” she said, embracing her, and still holding her husband's hand, “George has told me all. How ungrateful I have been! I wronged you by supposing you interfered with my happiness, and you, on the contrary, have sacrificed all—your very health—to save *him* for me.”

“Leave me, dear love; your guests will be surprised at your not entering the dining-room immediately.”

"Oh, but I must speak to you, Ima; I must tell you how much I admire you,—how thankful, yet how grieved, I feel."

"There's your father come for you, Ellen;—go."

The remainder of the company was close at hand: the young couple passed on to the dining-room.

A few hours afterwards there was a post-chaise at the door of Ivy Cottage. The horses were decked in coloured ribbons, and the post-boys looked as merry as if they were so many bridegrooms. The carriage-door was long kept open. The young bride lingered on the threshold of the home she could no longer cross as a child. The wedding tour was to be a very short one; yet Ellen and her mother wept at the parting, which to them was the beginning of a new existence, and broke, in some measure, the close ties which had bound the mother and daughter in the past.

Immacolata was to leave the next day for her journey to the south: the farewell she bid her young friend was a long and painful one;—they could hardly be separated. Ellen saw the frail form of her beloved companion sinking under an illness of which she had only that morning learned the cause. She clasped her in her arms in reproachful sorrow.

"Oh, Ima! I owe all to you; what a life of misery you have saved us from,—my poor brother and George! I shudder to think of it. Dearest, you so sensitive, how could you have gone through such a trial? I shall feel as George says he does on seeing you,—a weight of remorse, never to be lessened until you recover."

"Then I must do so quickly," she said, gently disengaging herself from her. "Go, dear love;

you have a husband now, and other duties : we must part."

"Not till you have forgiven me, Ima, my unjust suspicions; not till you have assured me you love me just the same as when we were children."

"Can you doubt it, dearest?"

"After all you have done for us, no!—you have been the guardian angel of us all, Ima; my brother's return to his duties, my husband's conversion,—God granted all to you; continue to implore His mercy on us still."

"Let us all pray for each other, dear; and thus we shall remain always united. Will you let me bid good-bye to your husband."

Ellen turned round to George, who was close at hand.

"I thought this was to end in Ellen's ordering me off to Nice; for really, Miss Falconer, I hardly think Mr. Baroni can have made Ellen and me two in one more than you and she are. I am very sorry to bid you good-bye; the more so, that the task of comforting my little wife will devolve upon me, and I'm but a lubberly sailor. Miss Falconer, I have learned from you a valuable lesson. I was a fool, and you taught me to know it; thank you; God bless you for the happiness I experience this day; Heaven reward you; good-bye!" He shook her hand warmly, while Ellen retained her hold of the other.

There was a frank, open, last, happy farewell, and yet the young bride knew that beautiful girl had been her rival; yet she felt naught but trust towards her and confiding affection in her husband. The same faith had hallowed the heart of each, and united them.

To this long *aparté* succeeded a word to all

their friends round. James was the last to embrace his sister ; he handed her into the carriage, and, as she wept on his shoulder, he gently took her hands and placed them in those of George. It was a mute concession of his rights, a confiding of her happiness from the friend of her childhood to him who was to hold to her the place of all.

George stepped in and waved his hand : the carriage drove off. James returned to his mother, and took her into the house. She had tried to bear up all the morning, and, as long as her guests surrounded her, she looked cheerful ; but, when the day was over, she went up-stairs and passed before the empty room. She listened, as if to the sounds of the pleasant voice that was gone, and had taken away with it so much of the gladness of that house.

CHAPTER XIV.

It is a varied road, that from Marseilles to Nice ; one in which the scenery, not yet desecrated by the all-levelling railroad, offers to the traveller a succession of pleasant landscape, which lingers on the mind exhausted by bodily weariness. The change by gradation, as one leaves the French land to enter on Italian soil, is remarkably obvious : the dwarfish orange shrubs seem to increase in size at each milestone ; the plain but tidy-looking industrious French maidens stare, assume the more regular features, the dark eyes of the South, and, at the same time, the national idleness of their favoured clime ; they leave the fields to stare at the travellers, and the only thing they show activity in is in running after the carriage to offer flowers with one hand, always holding out the other for a "sou." It was in the last days of October : the sun was powerful still, and, the season being late that year, autumn rains had not yet cooled the atmosphere, nor allayed the dust on the roads. The cumbersome diligence came on, beating the well-known track, tumbling, rolling, and panting down the last hills of France, inhaling the tributary dust, which stifled its horses, covered its wheels and panels, and gave the driver the appearance of being all clad in grey ; dust, dust, dust was the order of the day ; dust above, dust below. "The dust we tread upon was once alive," says the poet : small comfort that to travellers, parched with heat and

worn out by fatigue. The "coupé" shut the windows, the "intérieur" opened them, and looked out on each side, for a prospect of change, the "rotonde" complained the least, although their uncomfortable position gave them the best right to do so; some got down and walked by the side of the huge mountain, carried by five dust-coloured horses, which trod heavily on, step by step. The forest shade was still more pleasant than the close air of the carriage; the coupé opened the windows, and looked out on the pedestrians with envy; the conducteur was desired to stop, and an elderly gentleman got down; he seemed remonstrating, in English, with a juvenile voice inside: but, after a little entreaty, he consented to hand out, with great care and affection, a young lady, who sprang to the ground with infinite pleasure, and who, taking his arm, seemed to rejoice at being freed from her diligence captivity. She soon got tired however, and walked slower; but her pleased admiration dilated, on every turn in the road, at the huge rocks which the hand of man had hewn down, rendering nature subservient; at the fir-trees which, like ambition, seemed to thrive best on loftiest crags; beneath them the cork-trees extended their wide branches, of a lighter green; sometimes the sound of water was heard, a mountain torrent rushed through a cleft in the rocks, descended in a cascade, the finding naught to receive it but the flinty basis, dashed upwards in foam and spray, and angrily gurgled onward in a forced stream; then the appearance of a tiny straw-built hut, the habitation of the guardian of the forest; there it was evident the man had yearned for the life of cities, for some signs of comfort were round the miserable

dwelling; a dog's voice was at hand, the companion of lonesome hours, and over the thatch arose in luxurious beauty the flowering branches of a rose-tree. This last attracted particularly the young girl's attention; she touched her father's arm: "How can it thrive here?" she said.

"'Tis the desert flower," he replied, smiling.

She mused, and was silent. By-and-by all the inmates of the diligence had followed the example set to them—they all alighted. The young lady, we have already noticed turned round to reconnoitre her fellow-travellers; they seemed to be trades'-people by the conversation they held together: one young man, distinguished from the rest by his garb and demeanour, walked apart, and spoke with no one. His collected exterior bespoke him a priest; his white robes were those of the Dominican order, which much attracted the curiosity of the young lady. "Please, papa," she said to her father, "let us walk slower, I can't be looking behind me all the time; and I want to look at that strange dress."

"What! is it new to you, my love?"

"Yes, papa; I have only seen it in pictures."

"Oh! it is quite familiar to me, and well it may; your poor mother is buried in the cloister of the church which belongs to those monks."

"Papa, I wish we could speak to him; he seems so lonely."

They waited till the Dominican, who was proceeding with downcast eyes and hands folded within his sleeves, stopped suddenly, put his hand to his head, as if in pain, and looked seized with a sudden faintness. A good-natured Frenchman offered him his arm, and called out to the conducteur to stop; the gentleman we have above men-

tioned left his daughter, and hurried to his assistance, addressing him in Italian.

"I am subject to nervous spasms," said the stranger; "but I thank you, nothing serious ails me."

"I have many little restoratives at hand," said the Englishman, "and I must insist on being allowed to aid a fellow-traveller." So saying, he hurried the monk to his part of the carriage, where there was an empty seat; and, turning to his daughter, bid her ascend, smiling at the same time at his own ready compliance to her wishes. The Dominican looked very ill for about a quarter of an hour; he closed his eyes and seemed to suffer much pain; his new friend, after giving him a cordial, sat down by his side, and awaited the result. "I think you seem better," he said.

"Oh, signore," exclaimed the monk, with a grateful expression of countenance, "what a pleasure to hear my own language on foreign soil. To whom am I indebted for so much courtesy?"

"To a friend; is not that enough," answered the traveller, with an easy politeness of manner. "My name, if you wish to know it, Padre, is Falconer."

"Ah! signore, I have heard of you, then, as a great artist; I am a Florentine."

"Then we are half-fellow-citizens, for I have lived there almost all my life."

"Signore, I regret that the spirit of poverty does not allow me to share this compartment with you; allow me to offer my thanks, and to descend."

"You are not going to disoblige a fellow-citizen: this is mine—I offer it to you; will you

fly me because I am English, and a Protestant? do not pain my daughter and myself by a refusal; you can say your prayers here, and keep perfect silence, but I feel sure that you will be ill again if you return to that part of the carriage where the air is so close; I entreat of you, for the sake of your health, stay here."

"It would be unseemly in me to withstand such kindness; thank you sir, I have very lately taken this dress, and expected to embrace with it poverty, and the scorn of the world; you have proved to me a pleasant disappointment: sir, this is my first step in the world."

"You are not a Padre yet, then?"

"No! only a novice; I left Florence to study at Sorrizze, under the Rev. Père Lacordaire; the will of my superiors now sends me back to Piedmont, where, after a two years' probation, I hope to take my place among the workmen of the Lord's vineyard."

"Your language betrays you not of ordinary birth; allow me, with all due regard to your feelings, to observe that the cowl is often adopted by those who have much ignorance to disguise, and the want of education and disagreeable manners of your brethren often deserves the feeling of contempt they meet with."

"Nor do the sons of St. Dominic ask for high places in men's esteem, sir; they wish to be the smallest of the small; they are a militia recruited among the poor and ignorant; look on them without any consideration as to religion; look at their origin: it was, when the peasant, bowed down under the yoke of his master—when the burden of servitude lay heavy on the poor—then, as now, liberty spoke accents which are not

confined to the educated mind alone,—a child of the people arose; he had dreamed of a glory and a liberty conformable to the ages of faith in which he lived; he called on the poor to take the rights left to them by the divine Legislator of the mount; he passed on, sweeping thousands in his train; and from that time the people assumed an individual character. The baron, who had tyrannized over them, now bowed before the humble frock and cord, the insignia of poverty; repentant pride assumed it, and mingled its prayers and penance with the sufferings of the poor. Such was the first blending of ranks, the first social revolution: charity worketh great things, sir."

"You plead the cause well, and I hear you with intense interest. The cowl you wear, though, is that of the *Frères Prêcheurs*,—an order different from that you speak of, and is wont to be worn by men of education and birth. I could not, forgive me, if I say so, have accosted you with feelings of such friendly regard, did I not think I recognized in you something more than a simple monk."

The religious looked alarmed; he bent his head, so as to let the cowl fall partly over his face, and did not reply.

"Oh! never fear," said the Englishman, smiling, "I have never seen you before, and do not know your name; my remark is simply a conjecture, owing to my artist's habit of studying features. I am a Protestant, as I already mentioned; but a long stay in Italy has made me acquainted with all Catholic customs; and my dear girl here, holds up for St. Peter's sway,—so I must needs submit. I have not introduced her to you: Immacolata is a Florentine by birth, and a fervent Catholic, as her name proves."

The young girl bowed, as her father thus mentioned her; the monk looked at her, and as a salutation, held towards her his long rosary; it terminated in a small crucifix of ivory, exquisitely carved; Immacolata took it in her hand and kissed it reverently. "How beautiful," she exclaimed; "oh! how beautiful; see, father."

"It is, indeed, an object of great value," observed Mr. Falconer; "such as should not be exposed to exterior injury, padre."

"Nor would I wear it," replied the Dominican, "had it not been a special request of the donor that that sacred symbol should never leave me."

"It was surely not the artist's gift?"

"Oh no! of a pure soul, who prayed and wept over it often, but whose sorrows have ceased, I trust, now."

"Oh!" said Immacolata, kissing it and then letting it go; "what a fit remembrance is the dying Saviour of a dear relation who is dead!"

The monk shuddered as he repeated the word *dead!* clasped the little crucifix convulsively to his lips, and for a few minutes seemed absorbed in prayer: "Thy will be done, O Lord!" he repeated; "is not all dead to the poor friar, when he devotes himself to Thee? O Lord, thy will be done, not mine!"

His fellow-travellers, pained at his emotion, averted their gaze; when he raised his head again, he was more pale than before, but the expression of his countenance was calm.

"I ask pardon," he said, with visible embarrassment, "for being so troublesome a companion; my illness is of a capricious nature."

"Do not, pray," said Mr. Falconer, "remember there is anyone here except yourself; endeavour

to take some rest ; you have, perhaps, spent many sleepless nights, and this journey is most fatiguing. Ima, my dear, you look very tired ; shut your eyes during this hour of oppressive heat, and I will bid you open them at the next fine view which I think will please you ; do, my dear girl, try."

The young lady smiled a ready compliance, and leant back on the cushions ; her father took up his newspaper ; the Dominican's eyes were also closed, but open, perhaps, to other visions ; for his lips moved, and the long rosary glided through his fingers. As he sat opposite to him, Mr. Falconer could examine undisturbed the fine classical features of his head. Delicate as was his frame, it had not been formed so ; the well-developed muscles spoke of great strength, undermined by an interior and consuming malady ; but the soul that inhabited that frail tenement, was one of noble energies, which would not leave it until its task was done ; that man was born to great things, whichever way he turned the aspirings of his gifted mind. Thus far the artist, and observer of human nature ; but he could not see what his daughter, with the pure eye of faith, divined ; that was a soul which, lofty in its desires, ardent in its search after happiness, had been purified by much sorrow, and, after a long struggle, had turned to its God. That brow had not bowed in prayer since childhood, but had been suddenly brought low, and had responded to the call. The heart which had clung to earth had felt its bonds torn asunder by a pang, and had risen on high. It was seeking peace, and would soon find it, and that strength might be granted unto him until the

end, was the prayer which arose from the young girl's heart, as she reclined by her father's side, and the surrounding landscape faded from her drowsy eyes.

On, on they went, till the diligence came to a dead stop, and the conductor with a curse, rendered none the more elegant by being uttered in the Provençale tongue, came to each window, announcing to the travellers that they would probably have to remain until night in that most unenviable position, owing to some clownish postilions having decamped, and left nothing but a heap of ruins in the middle of the road. At this most unintelligible statement, the travellers were struck with dismay; but Mr. Falconer, who saw what was going on from the front windows, alighted, and his daughter, having awoke and inquired what was the matter, he desired her to come with him, as there were ladies in the case.

The road was indeed stopped by two travelling carriages, one of which had met with an accident; it was lying partly on its side, as the wheel had come off; two ladies who had occupied it were sitting on some luggage by the road side, and their servants crowded round them much distressed, wondering what was to be done, and giving no help whatever.

Upon inquiry, it was found the postboys had taken the horses and ridden off to the first village they might chance to meet, in order to find a cartwright who could put on the wheel. The ladies, left in this lonely place, were much frightened, and one of them had fainted. Mr. Falconer made his way through the servants, and addressing the lady who held her companion in her arms:—

“Can I be of any use?” he asked in French;

"my daughter will be most happy to comfort you, if naught else."

"Oh, monsieur ! I am indeed much distressed ; my poor sister is so ill, and I cannot find my smelling-bottle."

Immacolata immediately produced hers, and bending over the lady, applied it to her with much kindness; but the swoon had been a long one, nor was it easy to revive her.

"Fresh water would be of more use, do not you think so, madame? "

"Oh, if we could but procure some."

"I have some ; I am afraid it is not very cool though ; please, papa, would you get it? "

Mr. Falconer reappeared in a moment bearing a large bottle cased in straw, and a glass, from which the young lady sprinkled a few drops over the face of the invalid. She opened her eyes, but faintly, and closed them again ; her sister stooped down and spoke to her:—

"Her lips are parched," she said, "she is thirsty."

Immacolata squeezed a lemon in a glass, and pouring some water over it, "This will be more refreshing," she said, "than plain water," and she held it to the lady's lips, who, already much revived, drank with evident pleasure ; and then raising her head, surprised, and a little alarmed:—

"Where is Sarah?" she said ; "where am I? "

"Do not be frightened, dear, we have been stopped on the road, and mademoiselle has kindly helped me to revive you."

The lady turned to look at the person thus designated, her eyes fell upon Miss Falconer, and

as they did so, her features, naturally plain and harsh, altered to a sweet and admiring smile.

"You do not look strong yourself, my dear young lady, and I thank you the more for your kindness."

"Oh, I am so happy," returned the girl with warmth, "so pleased to have been able to assist you : you must have been much frightened in this great road."

"I might have fared worse ; the night might have surprised us here, and then poor Sarah would have perhaps seen me die in her arms ; a fit death-bed, though, for a poetess, this forest and this glorious sun-set."

"Hush, sister, speak not so despondingly."

"Nay, I am playful ; see you not how my spirits have revived in this late trance ; but explain to me, Sarah, as we are surrounded by such kind and good company."

Her sister then told her they were the cause of the diligence being stopped, and all were obliged to wait for the return of their horses and postboys.

"I am very much distressed," she said, addressing all those who had come round her, "very much distressed at being the cause of so much inconvenience." Although the words were polite, the glance she cast around her was so haughty that none ventured to reply but Mr. Falconer.

"I trust, madame, you will soon be released from your present situation, a most unpleasant one to an invalid ; I very much fear the dew will fall heavily after this warm day, had you not better take shelter at least in our diligence ? "

"I thank you, sir, I had rather breathe the air a little longer ; I have been imprudent all my life, it is too late for me to take care now."

"It is never too late, madame, to mend the past," he observed, smiling.

"*Qu'importe?*" she said; "my life has been a fine past, *qu'importe* how it closes?"

"Ah!" exclaimed Mr. Falconer in extreme surprise, "I beg pardon for not recognizing you sooner; I had merely requested my daughter to show sympathy towards an ailing traveller I was far from supposing I regret sincerely to find report had spoken true, and that the health of madame has so much suffered."

"I am but a wreck," she said; and smiling at Immacolata, "you are young and beautiful, mademoiselle; beware of admiration, see how dear I have purchased it."

The innocent girl blushed so deeply that the lady seemed to regret her remark. "But you need not advice from such as I," she added; "yours is a pure and happy life, all marked out for you; and yet," she whispered, turning to her father, "that nature is not an ordinary one; your daughter is a child of genius, or my knowledge of countenances has served me but little; I have never looked on a face more innocent; were I younger and better, I would have loved that child passionately."

Mr. Falconer looked a little alarmed at the strange compliment.

"Fear not," she said, "I will not even embrace her, much as I would wish it; noble as is my profession, there is between her and me too wide a chasm."

A triumphant exclamation was uttered by the different members of the party; the postboys had returned with workmen, and the wheel was being put on. The Dominican, who had till now

remained behind, went to inspect the work; as he passed, the lady rose, still leaning on her companion.

"I am an artist, madame," said Mr. Falconer; "allow me to offer you my arm."

"Ah, I was not mistaken then, it was fraternal kindness that brought you to my succour; farewell, mademoiselle, a strange accident has made us acquainted; I see you do not know me, but your father will tell you my name; it is one which posterity will hold as immortal; when you hear it, you will perhaps remember with pleasure your meeting with Rachel."

Miss Falconer, in her extreme surprise, could not utter a word of reply; she continued to hold the hand the great tragedian had offered her, and remained wonderingly gazing at those features she had heard so much spoken of. Her unfeigned amazement rather pleased the Jewess.

"I thought that, like a proper English girl, you would be shocked, but I thank you; keep your heart good and kind, and remember that those who despise their fellow-creatures are more guilty than the despised; how many natures would be turned from evil did they find in life some compassion and a little love."

She re-entered her carriage, thanked Mr. Falconer, bowed to the bystanders; her sister let down the blinds, and they drove off.

"Allons! en voiture, messieurs et dames!" called out the *conducteur*; "'t isn't my horses are going to take this stop as easily as you are; our journey is put back, our supper at Le Suc will be burned up or stale, and we shall arrive at Nice in the dead of the night after to-morrow; if I don't make a *procès* to all these private travellers, who

go stopping up the road for honest people, my name's not what it is."

Menacing as was the threat, it was lost in air, as many greater men's speeches have been before; and the travellers took possession of their former seats, rather pleased at the interruption which had broken the monotony of the journey.

"Are you aware," asked Mr. Falconer of the monk, as they found themselves again side by side, "who were the persons we unexpectedly met?"

"No, indeed! I perceived they were ladies, and supposed I could not be of any use."

"It was the tragedian Rachel, and her sister, going to spend the winter at Cannes."

"Indeed! that is indeed a celebrity! I have seen her in my worldly days, but was not aware she was brought so low."

"Oh yes! she has been very ill for a long time, and spent last year at Cairo; it is said the triumph of La Ristori contributed not a little to hasten the progress of her malady; that would not surprise me, for public applause has become to her a necessity."

"Do you think genius requires exterior help, sir?"

"Yes, my good friend, I speak from experience; the sacred fire would become extinct within us, were we left sole guardians of the flame. To us, who feel a love for the beautiful, is given the power of revealing it; to us is given its creation, but not for us alone is the glorious faculty bestowed; if to us the ray is given, 'tis that we may illumine mankind; if to us is granted the master-key of a great harmony, 'tis that we may wake in other souls chords that will vibrate into

a new existence; if to us a great idea, 'tis that we may give it life, and communicate it to other minds, which, but for this contact, would have ignored the innate mysteries of their own worth."

"How very deep papa has got," observed the young lady.

"And Ima has understood, has she not, or I am much mistaken."

"I was thinking, father, how what you say is proved by your own history; how I love to hear you tell your journey to Florence, when a boy."

"Your dear mother was to me the revealing angel of my destiny; had it not been for her, talent would have died within me, for I was homeless and unprotected; from her I learnt to hearken to a generous impulse; and this is why I wish Immacolata to be always ready to do good; the smallest kind act may have such ulterior consequences."

"Dear, good mamma! I think I remember her still; am I like her, papa?"

"Very much so in face, but your nature is warmer, my child, and he stroked her hair fondly; how pale and exhausted you look, and yet there was a flush on your cheek a little while ago."

"I am indeed, papa, rather tired," and leaning back, she was seized with a violent fit of coughing.

The monk closed the window next to him. "Perhaps there was a draught," he observed, "which might harm the young lady."

She thanked him, and then, at her father's desire, became silent and rested. Night soon closed in, and sleep fell on all the inmates of the diligence. At midnight the *conducteur* came

bustling at each door, inviting one and all of the travellers to descend to supper; the savory smell of roast mutton and hot soup passed out from the windows of the inn, and temptingly assailed the *voyageurs*, yet few accepted the call to this most ill-timed meat. At the end of an hour, the *en voiture* was heard again, and the driver, being of rather a pleasanter humour after supper, contradicted his previous prophecy, and all present were assured they should awake in Nice the next morning.

Who has not heard of Nice! of its salubrious climate, of its warm winters and sunny days! Who that has visited it has not brought home pleasant stories of its lovely scenery, and its eternal spring! Even those who have sought its genial warmth for the recovery of a beloved relative, and saw their hopes crushed by the great destroyer, have been comforted that the last days of the dear ones were calm and serene; that they could look on the face of that nature, so beautiful, which raises the heart upwards, and makes it long for the happy land of which this is a shadowy, yet pleasant image. They have felt grateful that their last sigh, prolonged by the benign influence of the climate, had naught in it of the bitterness of death, and their dying hour was so peaceful that it seemed less a sinking into the tomb, than an upward flight of the weary spirit to realms of bliss beyond the skies.

The last relay of horses had been put on, and the diligence stopped no more until it reached the frontier of the Pont du Var; the voices of the douaniers; the hauling down of trunks, and the vociferations of men climbing up the sides of

the ponderous diligence, effectually awaking such of the travellers as were yet asleep.

"My dear girl," said Mr. Falconer, gently touching his daughter, "I am sorry to disturb you, but these men are clamorous for your keys."

"Oh! papa," she exclaimed, merrily; "are we besieged; what do these scaling-ladders mean?"

"Unroofing our cumbersome vehicle, I verily believe, at the bidding of the douaniers. What, are you off to sleep again? Open your eyes, Ima."

"Nay, I would rather keep them closed till this scene of confusion is over; to see my bonnets and dresses so mercilessly tossed out of my hand-boxes is too much for my nerves."

"Will you not salute your country, Ima? This is Italy."

"Well, really, papa, sleepiness is a powerful antidote to enthusiasm; I never felt so stupid in all my life."

"Rest, then, my love, a little longer; I am getting down for our passports; padre, shall I take charge of yours, as you seem not inclined to descend either?"

The monk thus addressed, looked up; he had had his head bowed down on his hands, and seemed quite unconscious of what was going on."

"My passport? oh! here it is, sir; it bears my worldly name, Alberto del Monte; I am much obliged to you," and he resumed his former attitude. But a small parcel of books which he had taken out of his night-bag rolled down unperceived, and fell at Miss Falconer's feet; she stooped to pick them up, and returning them to him,—

"You had better pack them up again," she said, "or you will leave them behind."

"Oh! thank you, signorina; I should have been sorry to lose them, for they were confided to me to distribute in the course of my missions. Will you allow me to offer you one? They are small but good, and the poor friar would fain show his sense of your kindness."

She accepted it with pleasure, and turning over the leaves, she said, in a low voice: "Pray for my father, will you? for I have at heart a great grace."

"I understand, signorina; I will ask God each day that the grace of faith may be conferred on him."

"Oh! thank you, I have no other wish."

"And may I ask you," he continued, "in memory of this journey we have performed together, in memory still more of the pilgrimage we daily perform towards the same end, that you will remember in your prayers, one, who——"

"Oh! not myself," he continued, seeing her look up inquiringly; "but when you use that book, will you pray for a soul, a sister in Catholicism, and ask that the fruits of the Holy Spirit, peace and joy, may be given to one who has much to combat?"

She only answered by joining her hands, and bowing her head; and he understood she was complying with his request.

Happy community of prayer, which belongs to the One Faith, how acceptable thou art to Jesus, and how powerful before his throne! How often in an hour of trial has strength, unasked and unexpected, been conferred! how often comfort descended on a weary soul! 'twas the mysterious

fruit of a prayer, which, unknown to us, pleaded our cause before God.

The reappearance of Mr. Falconer gave a diversion to the conversation: "All's right," he said, "we've seen the last of France."

"That does not express a regret, sir, does it?" observed the monk.

"No! I know Italy so well; 'tis to me like another home; had my daughter been stronger, I would have liked her to spend a month in Paris, but she had no wish for it; and as our journey has simply her health in view, we hurried on."

"Oh! papa, there is the sea! what a glorious bay! and the sun rising over the mountains gilds a tiny town beneath; is that Nice?"

"It is, lady, said the friar. This is, indeed, the best view of it; I am glad you enter it in the morning, and receive a favourable impression; we shall soon leave the high road and pretty country, and the town itself, I fear, you will not like so well as when viewed at this distance."

"You know it well, padre; does your journey also end here?"

"No! I must on to Turin, and for the first time since I have assumed this habit, I feel the indifference I would fain practise is very alien to my nature. I regret, sir, deeply, that our acquaintance has been so short-lived; I thank you from my heart for the courtesies I have experienced at your hands, and would fain offer you a grateful friendship."

"Nay! I claim it," said Mr. Falconer, shaking him by the hand warmly and repeatedly; "accept my esteem in return; and if ever I can do anything for you, remember we have been for

two days shut up in the same diligence; and fellow-prisoners, you are aware, are indissolubly linked."

The rolling of the carriage wheels on the pavement put an end to further discourse; the travellers began to collect their divers little parcels, and alighted shortly after in the courtyard of the Hôtel des Etrangers.

CHAPTER XV.

NICE! Nice! town of victory is thy etymology, and yet peace seems to us more justly thy name. Land of peace! of quiet happiness, and of sweet memories, thou hast proved to all that lingered on thy soil, and felt in the warm embrace of thy restoring clime the welcome of Italy, Alma Mater of the world!

Who can say which of thy graves is the pleasantest, which of thy hills the most pleasant to look on? It is not only that thy beauty is surpassing, it is that thou art the home of all those who suffer, and the sweet restorer of those who are sick at heart.

There is a tiny port, extending to the west of the town, the most unaristocratic side of it; not a particularly clean quarter, not very civilized either, as if the *étrangers* had not much frequented that vicinity; but the entrance to that harbour is a large and beautiful bay; the shore which it bathes goes by the name of "Lazaret," in memory, we suppose, of some former sanitary building of that name no longer existing or sheltered, and a most pleasant situation is this at the foot of the Mont Baron, yet hardly known of until late years. It required English taste and discernment to discover this nook, and four or five villas, of elegant architecture, rise now, at different intervals, on the hill, thereby gladdening the eye of the visitor, and leading from one to another by roads hewn in the rocky sides of the mountains.

"Not a good situation that," say the wiseacres of Nice; "an English monomania that, of turning their houses to the north-west;" and if it be so, does it not reveal, perhaps, an instinctive yearning towards the distant fatherland? is not this building of a home on the rocks, and at the point where the sun's rays expire, a reminiscence of Albion's cliffs, and an innate love for the memories of youth? The Hôtel Royal opens the series of English colonists, the Villa Garibaldi forms an angle, then the road turns and winds along the foot of Mont Baron, the last hill in sight being crowned by Mr. Smith's fortified castle; the mediæval turrets of which are not yet completed; a little before reaching this is to be seen a very large house, built likewise against a rock; its first story is painted red, the second green; it is surrounded by low walls, above which is visible a double winding staircase, prodigiously high, which, at certain hours of the day, swarms with crowds of big, little, and middle-sized boys; down they rush with wonderful alacrity to the play-ground: about an hour afterwards a bell rings, and they toil up again the staircase with affected weariness, as if the height of it were something insurmountable. At certain hours of the day, there is silence, broken at other times by a low hum, which, taken up by a hundred young people, *sotto voce*, produces a most extraordinary effect, something that one might liken to the sounds issuing from a Brobdignag beehive. It is enough to make one suppose these young gentlemen are the most studious scholars on earth, seeking the high road towards the acquirement of wisdom and knowledge; we must, of course, suppose the last. They are but boys, very merry boys, rather precocious

in mischief, as we might gather from scraps of conversation which pass over the walls, or the remarks they exchange when they go out to walk two and two, in military uniforms, not particularly silent; not very strictly disciplined evidently, but such fine young fellows, well proportioned, under those becoming coats, and such arch looks under those soldiers' caps, as showed how very difficult must be the government of that republic. It was a Thursday, and the mimic regiment had just passed out of the walls with a light step and an affectation of breathing more freely out of the precincts; for the class had lately had a quarrel with their professor, and sought to testify their displeasure by their anxiety to get out of doors; but the master, not being a gentleman of much energy, let them pass on, heedless of their disrespectful demeanour, which only had the effect of rendering them more noisy in order to attract his attention; pulmonary efforts becoming more violent, deep groans issuing from the group, and not a few spitting at the college door. Some turned back and touched their caps derisively to one of their companions who stood looking over the wall, evidently in disgrace; he looked after them indignantly, and called out in French:—" *Vauriens, méchants vauriens et mauvais camarades*, if ever I get myself again into a scrape for you, I'll be hung first. *A peste* to those wicked Italians, I won't live among them, I won't; I'll write to my father this very afternoon, I'll tell him I can't live here. No, that won't do; I'll write to my sister—she, poor thing, knows what vexation is, and she'll feel for me."

He was going in to execute his threat, which had already much comforted him, when his eye

caught something which excited his curiosity, and he stooped over the wall. A middle-aged gentleman and a young lady in a garden hat descended slowly an adjoining garden, which, being on the slope of a hill, was quite exposed to view; they opened the gate which led to the road, and proceeded onwards in a direction opposite the town. "Ah!" said the boy to himself, "these must be the persons who have taken the Villa Bermondi, which has been so long closed; my companions remarked yesterday the windows were open; it is lucky they are not here, or they'd have written fifty sonnets before night to that pretty girl, had they seen her; a very nice young lady, just the height of my sister Pauline; poor dear sister, how I'd like to see her there walking so near me:" and the boy, softened at the recollection, forgot his anger and fell to musing. "How she'd like to see what kind of a place I'm living in; I promised her I would sketch my school for her; well, I have time, and I am quiet now that those imps of wickedness are out of the way, and I'll write to her when it is done; and so I'll have passed my afternoon pleasantly, notwithstanding the ill-nature of these *gueux*, whom I detest, *de tout mon cœur*."

He was a youth of about fourteen, of a fair complexion and very delicate appearance; his demeanour seemed gentle, hardly in accordance with the angry ebullition of feeling he had just displayed with reference to his schoolfellows, except, indeed, that gentle natures always feel most deeply a slight or an injury. Henri de la Roche Ligne was a new comer to the school, and his inexperience had been played upon. He had been coaxed into helping his companions in a for-

bidden amusement, and had paid the penalty of his good-nature. He was soon reconciled, however, with his seclusion, and had passed an hour drawing undisturbed, when large drops of rain fell upon his paper, and he quickly put up his drawing implements. "What a country!" he exclaimed; "sun one moment and rain the next; something like the people, worthy one of the other. What a black cloud and lightning, too!" he exclaimed, as an angry peal of thunder reverberated through the rocks. "Well, it seems I am to be more favoured by the weather than my friends; my afternoon's captivity has saved me a ducking." He prepared to re-enter, and, looking up in the direction of the last hill, he saw the lady and gentleman, whom he had noticed, setting out on their walk. "Before they get down," he said to himself, "the rain will be at its height; poor young lady, how wet she will be in her light dress, ah!" An idea struck him; and, swift as an arrow, he flew up the winding staircase, and appeared again in a moment with two umbrellas in his hand; down he jumped headlong, as if the breaking of his neck had been his primary object; a servant appeared at the window.

"Signorina, in the name of mercy, what are you about? I was desired to take care of you; come back."

"Mind your business," replied the lad, dashing past the porter, who had only just bethought himself of bolting the door to stop the runaway boy.

"I'll be back in a moment, be quiet," he exclaimed, and off he went, never stopping till he reached the villa of Mr. Stuart, where he found the party, whose movements he had watched,

sheltered by a tree. "Monsieur, mademoiselle," he said, accosting them in French, "permit me to offer you these, and allow me the honour of serving you."

"This is more than fortunate," said the gentleman, "that you should so kindly find yourself on our way."

"Oh, I am French," said the boy proudly, "as you may perceive; I belong to that school. I saw you, and came to help you."

"A thousand thanks; shall I, my dear girl, hold this over you?" he said, addressing his daughter.

"Thank you, papa; I think that young gentleman will shelter you, and I will take care of myself;" and she moved on, stepping carefully on the uneven road.

"And to whom am I indebted?" asked Mr. Falconer, for it was he.

"My name is Henri de la Roche Ligne, monsieur, *à votre service*."

"I am more obliged to you than you can even understand; had my daughter been caught in that shower it might have brought on a serious illness."

"That was just what I thought, sir, as I looked at you over the wall; mademoiselle had better walk quicker before the ground gets wet."

"What a dear intelligent boy," returned the gentleman; "and so you are from that school. I will call on the director to-morrow and compliment him on his pupil."

"Indeed, sir, you may spare yourself that trouble, for my education is none of his doing; and, had I been brought up here, I'd be a boorish Nissard, like the rest."

"What patriotic pride!" resumed Mr. Falconer, evidently much amused.

"I happened to be alone at the school, sir, and rushed out; every one is out walking to-day."

"Well; and are you not going in again?"

"Oh, let me accompany you home. You see there is the servant after me, grumbling; let him have his fill, and grumble for something."

"No, my dear boy, I cannot allow you to go further."

"And the umbrellas, sir."

"I will send them back in five minutes; I live at the Villa Bermondi."

"Oh yes, sir, I know that."

"And I will call on you to-morrow, and improve our acquaintance; good-bye, my little neighbour, we shall be very good friends, you will see." So saying, and with a view to save the boy from a scolding, he called the servant of the school, gave him a coin for his trouble, and, desiring his compliments to the director, announced he would call the next day. Henri looked after them a little, and then ran into the school-room, much pleased at his day, which had ended pleasantly, and which he forthwith set to writing about to his sister.

Our old friends, Mr. and Miss Falconer, preferring to the fashionable Quartier des Anglais the more secluded Lazzaretto, had taken up their abode in a small villa, where privacy seemed assured to them, and Immacolata might indulge in constant out-door exercise without incurring the trouble of dressing in the fashion. It was a quaint-looking cottage, painted yellow, and its first floor very low, so that the second alone was habitable, and, being more elevated, commanded

an extensive view. A grove of orange-trees descended on a slope down to the sea-shore, and beyond extended the bay, bordered on one side by the promontory of Antibes, and on the other the invisible boundary, dissolving into space, the waters mingled in one horizon with the sky above. How they varied these waters, both in hue and aspect, and how their peaceful gurgling, or the voice of their anger, held sweet commune with Miss Falconer's meditative mind. Hour after hour would the delicate girl pass at her window, watching the waves and the sun's decline; and each time did her cheerful look and sunny smile show that her thoughts had penetrated beneath the surface, and that the surpassing beauty of that scenery had been to her a stepping-stone to a beauty and a love far beyond. Among the moral complaints of our age is a morbid melancholy, which often invades our literature, and seems the necessary complaint of genius. A seeking for that which they find not, an unintelligible longing for something undefined, a bitter disappointment at all that life affords, and an insurmountable sadness which, under the most poetical names, is nothing but *ennui*; such seems to be the penalty of superior talent and of a sensitive mind. Alas! that they who are most gifted should prove most ungrateful, and despise the happiness within their reach. Why dwell in those regions of fancy, the sojourn of which unnerves and dispirits the soul, why love to seek in the works of our Heavenly Father aught but the image of His goodness and providence; is not that our Eureka?

Miss Falconer's delicacy had been increased by a long and fatiguing journey, and repose of

mind and body was the constant prescription of her doctor ; she had lost much of her former activity and sprightliness, but the even gentleness of her temper triumphed over the wearying effects of confinement and suffering, and her anxious desire to be her father's constant companion had induced her to go and walk with him the first day she felt sufficiently recovered ; had she caught cold in the shower of rain which ensued, the result might have been fatal. As it was, she reached home in safety, and Mr. Falconer felt very grateful to the boy whose timely aid had proved of so much value ; he called the very next morning at the school, and asked to see the French boy. Not a little pleased, Henri passed through the wondering ranks of his companions, and descended, with a due air of importance, to the small parlour close to the front gate.

Mr. Falconer greeted him cordially.

"How is mademoiselle, sir?" asked the boy, after responding to his visitor's warm shake of the hand.

"Thank you, *mon ami* ; I was very uneasy about her last evening, but she has not coughed in the least."

"I am very glad to hear it, sir."

"But how have you so much thought about you?"

"I have a sister, sir, of the age of mademoiselle, a delicate girl," and he put his hand to his chest ; "I am very fond of her, and taking care about her has taught me to be attentive."

"And kind-hearted too, I see ; upon my word, you are a rare boy. How come you to be here ? Do your parents reside in Nice ?"

"No, sir ; my relations are all at Avignon, and I, too, was at college there ; but last winter was a

very cold one, and I was taken ill: the doctors advised my father to send me to Nice, for my dear mamma died of consumption, and they suppose my sister and I have inherited some of her delicacy; but I don't like this place at all, sir, not this school especially."

"Well, they seem to give you liberty enough; you appeared to me quite your own master yesterday."

"Oh, that was because I was left *en pénitence*," said the boy, colouring.

"You do not look as if you could deserve such harsh treatment; how came that?"

"Oh, indeed! I don't think I was much in fault. Fancy, sir! I was sent out with the servant-man to make a few little purchases for myself, as I have no relations here to bring me the trifles I require, and my companions asked me to bring them a bottle of rum."

"Well! I should not call that a serious misdemeanour."

"Oh! but it was reckoned as such, sir; they made punch with it in the dormitory, while the master was asleep; his snoring kept us easy, and we made so merry, that from whispers we came to talking aloud, and ventured to set fire to the punch-bowl. The master was by that time quite awake; he stealthily approached our club, and when he saw the blue flame, tried to seize on the bowl, but it burnt him, which made him very angry. Each boy had rushed to his bed, but, unfortunately, the bottle had been slipped under my pillow, so I was considered the most to blame. We have all been deprived of recreation for three days, and I, in addition, had to stay at home yesterday."

"Well, that was very hard," said Mr. Falconer, who had laughed more than once during the narrative; "so hard that I must try and make you some amends. Do you think you could get leave to come out and dine with me?"

"Oh sir, I should like it above all things, only my professor—"

"Bears, *in petto*, perhaps, the scalding of the blue flame."

"But can we not appeal to a higher authority?"

"Oh yes, sir! there's the rettore, the best of men; he never punishes, and I'm sure he'd grant me anything."

"Excellent character! pray introduce me to this gentleman."

"I'll run up, and ask him to come and see you."

And the boy rushed up the winding staircase, and in a few minutes was again in sight, followed by a clergyman of about forty, whose kind, good-humoured countenance justified the boy's encomiums. Mr. Falconer introduced himself, explained the motive of his visit, and concluded by requesting that the French boy might come and spend a day with him. The rettore looked a little puzzled:—

"I am most willing," he said, "for Henri is a good boy, and I have myself often wished I could procure him some amusement, for he is lonely, poor fellow, without any friends to look after him," and he kindly patted the boy on the head; "but, on the other hand, I must not show any partiality, and as his master punished him yesterday, I cannot reward him to-day." The boy looked grievously disappointed, but the kind gentleman resumed: "Be comforted, my child, I do

not think you were as much to blame in that affair of the nocturnal punch as was supposed; let us reconcile things in this manner; you shall go next Sunday to this gentleman; thus, your studies will not have been interrupted, and my indulgence will not be the object of remark. Go now, for the first bell has rung; let me see, Henri, by your conduct during the remainder of the week, that I have not been mistaken in you." The boy kissed his master's hand, and withdrew in high glee.

"I cannot but admire your fatherly demeanour to your pupil," said Mr. Falconer.

"It is a weakness, I am afraid, of which I cannot divest myself; I love them all dearly, and had I my way, punishment should never be used towards such fine natures as that child who has just left us. And you, sir, are a foreigner, an Englishman, I presume?"

"I am; but long intercourse with your country has rendered me quite familiar with your language: my dear wife was an Italian."

"Our fine climate procures us the pleasure of many and yearly visits from your countrymen."

"Which you, I presume, never return?"

"We are too privileged, or too lazy, perhaps, to travel, sir."

"Yet there is a Piedmontese clergyman settled in my vicinity, and a very dear friend of mine."

"Can it be the Rev. Francesco Baroni?"

"The same; do you know him?"

"I do, indeed; we went through all our ecclesiastical studies together. Oh, how much I rejoice to hear once more of the friend of my boyhood, and how much indebted I feel to you, sir, for having sought my acquaintance."

"You must keep it up, then, for we are immediate neighbours; come and see me with Henri; you will meet my daughter, a fervent Catholic, and a parishioner of Mr. Baroni; you can talk with her by the hour of your friend."

"Thanks for the kind invitation, and for the additional inducement you hold out. I think I shall look forward to Sunday with almost the same impatience that Henri does; till then, adieu!"

He accompanied Mr. Falconer, who had already risen to depart, outside the door, and they separated.

CHAPTER XVI.

IT WAS Sunday morning, and while the bells of the parish church in the port of Nice tolled unceasingly, from four in the morning until ten o'clock, peasants in their gayest attire poured in from all roads, purposing to enjoy the Sunday in town. The ships in the harbour had all hoisted their flags; the boatmen assumed their Phrygian holiday cap, and smoked; the charcoal-men, having performed an extraordinary ablution, had dressed, and, sitting on the pier, showed handsome countenances, where scarcely a vestige appeared of their former complexion.

"Does the signorina forget it is Sunday?" asked a dark-eyed maiden of pleasing appearance, opening Miss Falconer's door, and passing her head in, which was dressed with care, and adorned with the national black velvet.

"What is the hour?" inquired Miss Falconer; "there has been such a noise since, and before the break of day, that I was kept awake, and only fell asleep a quarter of an hour ago."

"I came, because I thought the signorina would not like the misfortune of losing mass."

"True, Lucrezia; have I far to go to it?"

"Only down to the parish-church, signorina; the Immacolata Concezione."

"Is that its name? How glad I am! my own church. Go now, Lucrezia, and come back when I ring for you; I will get up and dress quickly."

"The signorina will call me back to do her

hair?" asked Lucrezia, lingering at the door; as if bent on not leaving.

"Yes; go, for the present."

Ten minutes had scarcely elapsed when the maid was at the door again; this time she took the precaution of rapping.

"It is not time yet," called out her young mistress, but Lucrezia was not to be easily baffled; she opened the door very slightly, and held out a letter.

"Oh! you may bring that in."

"I thought so," rejoined the girl, in a tone of triumph.

Immacolata took it, and glancing at the address: "Ah! dear Ellen," she exclaimed, and had almost broken the seal, when suddenly recollecting herself, she put it aside, and continued dressing.

"The signorina does not read it."

"No! I shall be late for mass."

"Shall I make tea for the signorina, and bring it in?"

"Oh! no, no, I will breakfast with papa when I return; ask him if he will kindly wait for me a little beyond the usual time, and take him that letter."

"But signorina will be very tired."

"Hush, Lucrezia, I cannot take anything before mass."

The girl understood; gazing at her young mistress with reverence, she grew suddenly demure and collected; while Immacolata, taking up a prayer-book, put herself under the hands of her simple attendant, who braided her hair and completed her toilette in silence."

"Shall I accompany you, lady?" she asked when she had done.

"Not unless you have to go to church yourself."

"Oh! I went to the first mass, 'tis the best."

"Indeed! I am glad to hear of your being attentive to your religious duties, but pray, do not in future make such a noise in the house, betimes."

"I am sorry for that; but it was not all my fault, I had a visit."

"What! at four in the morning?"

"Yes, my sisters came down from the mountain, and wanted me to go up with them to the village fête this week, but I told them I could not, as I am in place."

"Is it a great disappointment to you?"

"No, signorina; for the great amusement is to dance all day long, and girls who wish to be good don't go to those feste."

"And Lucrezia is one of those who wish to be good?"

"Oh yes! ever since I wear this;" and she drew from her neck a huge brass medal, which she reverently kissed, and "don't you see," she added, touching her brown dress and white apron, "I am vowed to the Madonna?"

"Indeed! how is that! what does it mean?"

"Don't you know, signorina, and you a Christian?"

"But I have not lived in this country, Lucrezia, and that explains my ignorance. Come down the hill, and accompany me to the church, you will thus show me the road, and we can talk on the way."

Lucrezia went on, opened the garden gate, and came back to meet her mistress; as she did so, all her alacrity seemed to have abandoned her, her eyes were dimmed, and an expression of subdued,

but real sorrow, settled on her handsome sun-burnt features, showed that her heart was full.

Miss Falconer looked surprised, and seemed to ask an explanation.

"It is a thing I never speak of," she said, "but to Madonna, and to God; that is why I feel just as one does when a hurt is exposed to the air; but I love you, signora, although I have been so few days in your service, and I know it will do me good to talk to you. It is now three years since I came down from my mountains, where I had grown up an ignorant peasant girl; the lady whose property my father cultivated used to come to spend the summer in the country, and she employed me to take care of her little boy; the child took a fancy to me, and when she returned to town she took me with her; I remained in her service till my little master was sent to school; she then asked me whether I would prefer serving, or going back to my parents; but I had got so accustomed to the town life that I felt the work of the fields would be too hard for me; I chose to remain in service, and the good countess sought for me a place as child's maid in an English family; I had to carry a baby, and go out walking with the young ladies; they were very fond of the sea, and used often to hire a boat, and be rowed about on the bay, in which excursions I was always with them. They were so good-natured, that, instead of choosing one of those pretty boats, ornamented with flags and a blue awning, they used to employ an aged boatman, who was poor, and derived from his boat his only support. He was so old, poor man! that he could hardly row, and the oars were often plied by his son, and as I sat in the stern with the baby, I was very near

him, and he often looked at me, and I thought him very handsome; but that was nothing to his goodness; so dutiful to his father was he, so attentive to his business, so modest and silent. He was a fisherman too, and when he found handsome shells he used to give them to my young ladies. One day he made them a present of a box of these nice shells," and she touched a necklace she wore, in which the shells, curiously strung together, were of a variegated hue, and shone like opals. "They had them set, and wore them, and showed them to him; I suppose I looked as if I admired them, for he asked me,—

" 'Would you like a necklace?'

" 'I said at once, 'No!'

" 'But you need not fear to look like a young lady.' He said then, 'You know a peasant girl can wear that without being vain.'

" 'I was so pleased at his understanding my meaning, that I replied, openly, 'Since I left my parents, I do nothing without the permission of my mistress, the Countess Accaidi; I will ask her if I may.'

" 'He did not say anything more; but oh, lady, all the goodness that was in him shone in his face, and I thought if the Madonna means to send me a husband, I would ask her for that one. When I went next Sunday, as was my habit, to see my old mistress, I found her looking very serious; but she was kind, even kinder than usual.

" 'Be sure you conduct yourself well, Lucrezia,' she said, 'and I will do my best to make you happy.'

" 'At the end of the winter my English family went away; I was very sorry to see them go,

for themselves first, and then because our pleasant boat excursions were over ; but one day, as I visited the Countess Accaidi, I was surprised to find there Beppo, the young boatman. He went away just as I went in. I was afraid to ask my mistress what it meant, but she told me not to fear.

“ ‘This is not the first time that young man has called on me,’ she said ; ‘ we have talked a great deal about you ; he left me in charge this present for you,’ and she gave me this,” touching her necklace again and her ear-rings ; “ they are the gifts of a betrothal, to me the sign of my widowhood.

“ Beppo had asked for me, and my mistress undertook to manage all with my parents ; we were rather young, she said ; but as I could continue to earn money in serving, and Beppo had his own home and would earn in his trade, neither of us saw why we should wait for years to come ; we were full of trust in each other, but why wait for the future when we could enjoy the present ? I went up to the mountains to stay a little with my relations ; I found my parents pleased, for the kind countess had prepared them. Beppo came to see them and ask their consent ; we were solemnly affianced. He passed two days in the mountain, and then came down again, for he could not leave his business. I remained at home making my new clothes and preparing for my approaching happiness. Beppo was to return and see me very often, and when a week, then a fortnight elapsed without his returning, I felt a misfortune was at hand, I could stand it no longer. One morning, before break of day, I left my father’s house, and walked down to town without stopping. I went straight to the countess, who

burst into tears on seeing me, and would not tell me what had happened. I implored, and insisted on not being kept in ignorance. Alas! the truth was the worst for me to hear; I could never have supposed it so bad! Beppo had gone out fishing on the approach of a storm; it was supposed the boat was upset and lost, for he had never been heard of more. You suppose I felt ill, signora, for, if the heart breaks sometimes, mine did then, but all my thoughts were centred in one, and that kept me up. Was he, the good Christian, to die without burial? were his bones to lie in the waters without a prayer or a consecrated grave? Oh, I moaned and grieved bitterly for the loss of my affianced husband. I went back to the shore; it was here, signora," she said, for they had reached the extremity of the bay; "I walked from here to the foot of the farthest mountain within sight. I walked I know not how long, the whole day and part of the night, and when I felt myself getting very weak, I knelt down and offered my whole heart to the Madonna. I asked her to take him with her into Paradise; I offered her my sorrow; I implored of her that the bones of her faithful servant should not lie unburied; I made a vow that if she allowed him to be found I would be hers through life; that I would maintain strictly the maiden widowhood; that in memory of that consecration I would wear for ever the colours of Our Lady of Seven Dolours, and perform on foot a pilgrimage to the sanctuary of Laghetto. I then sank on the shore, and I remained there asleep until morning. I was not surprised on awaking to find myself there, for I had dreamt all night I was in the sea beneath, and the water gurgled in my ears; I thought it

was the purgatory of Beppo, and that I was sharing it with him. I rose, and, kneeling, said my prayers; involuntarily, I stooped over the ledge of the rock, and was startled to see beneath, on a rock, which was flattened by the battering of the waves, a man asleep! I drew back; I looked again, my heart told me it was he. His arms were extended and very white; his face was covered over with his red cap, which clung to his temples; his golden hair was blown about by the wind; the water had washed him ashore, and then had left him. I could not leave that spot. I was afraid of losing him now that the Madonna had given him back to me. I waited for the first peasant who passed on his way to Nice. I told him to go to the *Compagnia* of the Whites to which Beppo belonged. They came with the cross and with a bier, with the priest and all the fishermen of the port, for all were Beppo's friends, and from the peasant-boy, who had taken my message, they had understood he was found. Women came too, and took me away, that I might not gaze on his features, nor did I wish it; I cared not to see the change death had wrought in him. I followed him to the church, and wept at the altar, where I had hoped to kneel as a bride, and there I remained praying while his friends took him to the grave, where I could not go and see him laid, although the Madonna had granted it to my prayers. I go there often now though, and I try to be as good as he was, that our interrupted nuptials may be celebrated on high."

The two girls had reached the square in front of the church long before Lucrezia's narrative had closed, and Immacolata had stood a willing and tearful listener to the end. She now fairly threw

her arms round the girl's neck, and both mingled their tears in a silent embrace.

"Poor, poor Lucrezia!" was all she could say.

The bell of the church, which had ceased, began tolling anew; and the country girl, recovering the first, "Go, lady," she said, "that is the last mass."

"I will hear it for him," said her mistress.

"Do, dear lady; and will you offer your communion, too?"

"With all my heart! and often. I shall never forget him or you, more, dear courageous girl;" and she pressed her hand and entered.

Lucrezia knelt at the threshold, drew out a black rosary, said her beads for the dead, and then, wiping her eyes with her apron, returned homewards.

With calm and courage did the poor girl return to her daily duties, and in a short time resumed the cheerful air which was her wont, nor could any have guessed, from her appearance, the tale of woe that heart could unfold. Not that she was light or forgetful; but Lucrezia's comfort was derived from that pure faith which initiates us into the mysteries of the unknown world. She could pray for him she loved, and knew her prayer was more effectual to him now than all her earthly love could have been. Were it for this doctrine alone, Catholicism, we would love thee! There is not a feeling of our souls thou hast not hallowed,—not a passion thou hast not elevated and hallowed. Then, seated at our domestic hearth, and sanctifier of all our family joys, thou watchest over the graves of our loved ones, and forbiddest the survivor to forget! They are one!—the Church

that militates,—the Church that suffers,—and the Church that glories. Charity, that remaineth when all else is dissolved, unites in an imperishable link. Our brothers in heaven pray for us that combat, and we pray and atone for our brothers in Purgatory.

It was late, and much beyond her usual hour when Miss Falconer entered the breakfast-room, where she found her father already seated.

"Dear, dear papa," she said, coming behind him, and stooping over his shoulder, "how sorry I am to have kept you waiting."

"Indeed, my love, you so seldom deprive me of the pleasure of your company, that I found the room very empty indeed; but Lucrezia gave me this letter from home which you had left for my perusal, and I have had occupation sufficient in deciphering Ellen's microscopic handwriting. But what have you been doing—there is such a glow on your face?"

"I have been to mass, father. Do you know our parish-church bears my name?"

"Indeed! I must see it. I will go with you there some morning."

Miss Falconer sat down, and while she poured out her father's tea, and helped him first, he remained gazing at her long and intently.

"'Tis strange," he said, "how at times a look comes over you so like your mother: the resemblance is startling."

"I am very glad of it, papa."

"Don't heat yourself so much as that again, love; you have walked too quickly;" and he felt her warm cheek and her pulse, but that was calm.

Immacolata's mind was so pure, that, when she

approached the Holy Eucharist, it was with a heart undisturbed by any earthly thought or feeling. Something more than ordinary evidently passed between her and her blessed Lord, and the mysterious joys of that union imparted to her features a holy beauty, too, like that which angels wear, and which Mr. Falconer remembered as having seen lighting up the face of his wife when she had reached the threshold of immortality.

"Well, papa," resumed Immacolata, after a moment's pause, "how goes home?"

"Oh, they are all well! Ellen gives you an account of her wedding trip, says George is the best of husbands, and talks something unintelligible about owing all her present happiness to you. Surely you had nothing to do in their marriage, had you, Ima?"

"Oh, 'tis girlish, nonsensical talk, papa!—what next?"

"Let's see; they've hired a pretty little place for a year, which Ellen preferred to lodgings in town. She frequently spends the evenings with her mother; and on other nights, Mrs. Irvington, the O'Sullivans, and Mr. Baroni go to take tea with the young people."

"Dear Elly, then, is quite at the head of her house?"

"Then she speaks of her brother, who has applied for a prolongation of his furlough, and is, consequently, still at home. He studies a great deal, she says,—has grown very silent. On hearing his sister was writing to you, he begged your remembrance and your prayers. You have no intentions on the major, have you, Ima?"

"No, indeed, papa," she replied, laughing; "nor would this solemn manner of sending his

compliments encourage me if I had. How pleasant to hear from them! I wish I had Ellen here; how she would enjoy the fine air and climate, and all about this place."

A rap at the door claimed admittance, and the maid entered to clear away the breakfast-table. Mr. Falconer nodded, to signify they had quite done, and Immacolata, with the morning's conversation still fresh on her mind, cast on the girl a look of kind inquiry, to see how she had felt since. Lucrezia answered by a quiet smile, which Mr. Falconer observing:

"You seem to have made intimate acquaintance with that pretty maiden, Ima?"

"Wait until she goes, papa, and I will tell you her story. Oh, it is so sad!"

"Indeed! a story under that white kerchief? Nonsense, Ima; you have fancied her fit to figure in one, that's all!"

"A true account of herself from herself, papa; you shall hear it by-and-by."

"Quite ready, dear. I am very fond of stories, and if you took it into your head to varnish up 'Puss in Boots,' and deal him out to me as a treat, you should find in me a most patient hearer; *à propos*, we have guests to-day, and you'll have to talk to them; the rettore of the neighbouring college wants to hear all about his old friend Mr. Baroni."

"I need exercise no ingenuity in talking about that dear good gentleman; the simple account of his well-filled life is his best praise. Then you will take charge of the boy, papa; for, having no quiet game at hand, and being too old to play, I'm afraid he'll find me a very stupid companion."

"He is a dear child, and I will undertake the amusing of him. Here is your letter; read it at leisure, while I take my newspaper to the garden. Come and join me when you feel inclined, and we will take our accustomed walk on the beach."

Mr. and Miss Falconer returned long before the hour appointed for dinner, and were told their guests awaited them in the garden. They repaired thither, and the master apologizing,—“I could no longer withstand Henri’s entreaties,” he said. “Since this morning early he has been assuring me your invitation was to spend the day, and at the risk of being guilty of ill-breeding——”

“My dear signore, you could not confer on me a greater pleasure, and my little friend here is quite in the right. I am much obliged to you, Henri, for bringing your good rettore.”

“I was telling Don Maurizio something, sir. Will you please mention it, my dear master?”

“Henri fancies it would be a pleasure to mademoiselle to visit the neighbouring gardens, and as all the owners are my friends, I can gain admittance easily; but you have walked enough, perhaps, for to-day.”

“Oh dear, no! I should like it above all things; the grounds seem so prettily laid out. And you, papa?”

“By all means. Will you lead the way, sir?” and as the two gentlemen went on and entered into conversation, the boy fell back, and coming to Miss Falconer’s side, picked all the flowers as he went along and gave them to her.

“How did you know I would like flowers and flower-gardens?” she asked.

“Because my sister Pauline does.”

“Indeed! and where is she?”

"At home—at Avignon. I wish she were here!"

"You seem to be very fond of her."

"Oh, I love her; you can't think how much!" said the boy, and his whole countenance lit up; "and so would you if you knew her. She is just your height; but she is paler than you, and ill. I wish I were the eldest, and she should never have been ill."

"Indeed! what difference could that have made?"

"Ah! I would never have suffered her to cry, never to know the least sorrow,—she is so good; but I am too young. I was unable to comfort her, although she tells her secrets to no one but me; but I oughtn't to talk of her, for you don't know her."

"Oh, but I am immensely interested in her; is Pauline her name? Give her my love when next you write. As I seem to bring her to your mind, there must be some likeness between us."

"Yes, there is a little. I wish she had you for a friend: you can't think how good she is. She used always to take care of me when I was younger, and although she was *ma petite maman*, we talk together as if we were of the same age. See! this garden we are entering belongs to an Englishman; look at the rocks, aren't they beautiful! See what pretty walks are hewn out from them; aren't these ruins, made on purpose, amusing to examine? But, come higher; see, my rettore and your father have gone up to admire the view. Will you take my hand to help you up these steps?"

Mr. Falconer was coming down at the same moment.

"Will you venture the ascent, Ima? I was taken up in an interesting conversation, and had forgotten what a difficult path this must prove to you; but the view is an ample reward."

"I am coming, papa: I have a good guide here. But let me wait a moment; I want to look at a monk coming down that hill. I have not yet seen any like him."

"Oh," said the boy, "that is only a monk from Cinsiez, collecting alms for his convent. One meets them constantly."

"That is the order of Franciscans, Ima," explained her father. "Don't you remember our friend in the diligence telling us about them?"

"True; but, papa, I must say I prefer Mr. Del Monti a great deal, setting aside his white dress, which certainly looked much cleaner."

The boy, who had been waiting for her to come up, joined her at this, while Mr. Falconer returned to his companions.

"What!" he said; "do you know Mr. Del Monti? Did you see him in religious robes?"

"We travelled with him as far as Nice, and he went on to Turin. Is he an acquaintance of yours?"

"Yes; but I did not know he had taken the habit, and in what order?"

"St. Dominic's. But how came you to know him—he is not a Frenchman?"

"No; but he has some French relations in Avignon; he came to spend his vacation-time with them. He is, or was, an Italian *avvocato*; very clever, I believe, but poor, and . . . I don't know how . . . We knew his relations, and he made our acquaintance, and——"

"How very strange," said Ima, "that we

should know the same person. I was so much interested by him on our journey; he looked so clever, so good, and so ill."

"Ah," repeated the boy, "ill!"

"He was not so when you knew him?"

"No; but——"

"You must tell your sister of this coincidence. If she saw him likewise, I suppose she will remember him. One cannot help feeling interested in a person you have known embracing that career."

"Yes, I am sure she will be," said the boy, slightly colouring, and then dismissed the subject.

Immacolata had by this time joined her father.

"It is the same view as from our house," he said, "but much more extensive. I do love that wide expanse,—the mingling of sea and sky. Look in that direction; Don Maurizio tells me one can see Corsica on a fine day; but my eyes are no longer strong enough. Henri, do you show it us."

"Ima, sit down and rest on this little bench, so considerably placed on this elevation, and look up; what shelters it—your old friend."

Miss Falconer did as she was desired, and recognized a tree similar to that she had cultivated when a child.

"I have been telling the rettore about the convent flower, Ima, and he is the more interested, in that his friend Mr. Baroni knows you by that name."

"It is, indeed, a pretty appellation, but, I trust, only given in friendship, and never to be realized. Mademoiselle holds a place too sacred near her dear father for her to think of seclusion."

"Oh, we have no fears," replied Mr. Falconer,

smiling. "My pretty one knows how dear she is to me: she is my home flower now."

"Signor Rettore," interposed the boy, "you promised to let me have a close view of General Garibaldi, and he is in his garden now."

"Come down, then; this pathway leads directly to the villa. Would you like to come, too, Mr. Falconer; he is very polite, and your near neighbour. I shall have great pleasure in introducing you."

"Say yes, mademoiselle," whispered Henri; "ask your father to say yes. You shall see how pleased you will be."

"Papa," cried Miss Falconer, laughing, "I am all curiosity. Let us follow the Rettore."

And so they did, at a quick pace, hurrying down the rocky pathway till they arrived at a wooden gate, of open railing, painted green. Don Maurizio raised the latch, and at the slight noise a man of middle height, plainly dressed, and of a quiet appearance, left a shady walk in which he paced, and taking off his Calabrian hat, came forward to meet his visitors with a pleasant smile. He exchanged with Don Maurizio a warm shake of the hand. "This is an agreeable assault," he said: "my gate was unbolted, and open to besiegers. I am fortunate to have been on guard."

"I have taken the liberty, general, of introducing to you English neighbours, Mr. Falconer and his daughter. I presumed on your friendliness to assure them they would be welcome visitors to your grounds."

"Very, very welcome!" replied the gentleman, in English; and then, turning round to look at the boy, who had got behind him, in order that his observations of the great man might be full and

unrestrained: "and this young gentleman is one of your pupils, I presume?"

"Yes, general, and of your adorers."

"Ha! I am flattered to hear it; and when," he added, patting him on his shoulder, "are we to fix epaulettes here?"

"Oh, sir!" returned the boy, "I always meant to be a painter, until I heard my companions speak of you."

"Indeed! take care, one vocation would spoil the other; make your reflections, and only come to me when your mind is made up. But I keep this lady standing; and yourself, sir, will you walk into the house and rest? I have been called to Nice on a melancholy occasion—the death of my poor cousin, who was, in this garden, atrociously murdered last week; I leave the town to-morrow, and regret I cannot do myself the pleasure of returning this neighbourly visit. I must thank Don Maurizio; he knows I am very partial to your countrymen, sir."

"And I, general, have all my sympathies enlisted in Italy; I am an artist, and owe my talent and inspirations to your favoured land, where I have spent the happiest days of my life; my wife was an Italian, and my daughter is a native of Florence."

"And does the signorina remember the language of her people, and speak it?"

"I could not possibly forget it," replied the young lady, in Italian.

"I rejoice, signorina, that you are numbered among Italy's daughters; it struck me at first sight your appearance was not English; would that our countrywomen had the advantages of education which you possess in England, we

should then find many rivals to the Cornelias and Veturias of old; it needs superior women to form heroes, and seldom, oh, how seldom! are these found in our dear peninsula."

"You are severe to the sex, general, which is not the wont of the sons of Mars; have you been all your life as exacting?"

"I had formed to myself an ideal, sir, and it was realized for me; truly she was unparalleled, the woman of my heart; the moment which revealed to me her existence pointed her out to me as my fit companion, as one whose heart would share mine in the love of Italy, and verily she loved it, not wisely, but too well. Poor, poor Anita! you have heard of her, no doubt?"

"Her fate," interposed Don Maurizio, "is in the heart of every Italian."

"I do not know it," replied Mr. Falconer, "but the subject is too painful a one for you to dwell on, general."

"It is one I love,—there are men who fly the memory of their sorrows, I treasure mine; a noble stimulus to my patriotism, and the feeling of a wrong to avenge is to me the remembrance of Anita! She followed me through all the stages of my soldier's life, and I, too happy to have her by my side, saw only her strong heart, and forgot how the toil of such a life would tell later upon her frame. Nor till our campaign in Central Italy did the noble woman ever complain; even the cares of an approaching maternity were forgotten in the anxieties of the wife. I should have left her behind, and four months later she would have blessed me with another child; but she sacrificed herself for me and for Italy!

"We had forded a stream in the night, and

had been obliged to spend the time till daylight in marshy ground ; but what we strong men could support was too much for Anita ; the shiverings of fever came over her ; we formed a litter with branches of trees and placed her thereon, but we had nought to screen her from the rays of the noonday sun ; with indescribable agony did I walk by her side and hear her call for water, when I had none to give. I sought long for a cottage, where I at length found a little succour to alleviate her sufferings, but it was too late — she died in my arms ! and oh, before the dear remains had grown cold in my embrace, an alarm was given — we were pursued, and to save my companions, I was obliged to flee.

“ Nine years have passed, sir,” continued the warrior, wiping off large drops of perspiration which stood on his brow ; “ and that scene is vivid before me, and my heart bleeds within me as it did at that hour. If martyrs can save a cause, oh surely Italy has had her victims, her baptism of blood and of tears ! ”

“ And they plead for her, doubt it not, general,” said Mr. Falconer, grasping his hand ; “ there is an Eternal Throne where no cry is ever despised, no prayer ever uttered in vain ; the hour of freedom must ring for Italy, nor can that land despair which owns you for her son.”

“ I trust, sir, I trust in the worth of my country, because I love her : I do not admit that we Italians are degenerated ; smothered fires burn long, and will light upwards when the breath of Heaven touches them, and such I know will be the case of many ; but we are engaged in a conversation which my friend Don Maurizio does not like to join in.”

"You know I cannot approve of revolutionary principles general, much as I esteem yourself. The cause of Italian freedom, understood in the sense you and your followers have adopted, is at variance with the cause of religion. In your enthusiasm for our country, you would fain destroy the principles of order and hereditary right, which prouder nations regard as sacred; you would likewise infringe on the rights of the Head of our Church. Even as a friend, I must in conscience disapprove of your opinions."

"And as we cannot agree, it is rude in me to express them before you; if my guests are sufficiently rested, I will ask them to walk over the grounds."

He rose, and offered his arm to Immacolata, who hastily wiped away tears which had started to her eyes during Garibaldi's narrative.

"Nay, hide not, signorina, that proof of sensitive feeling in another's woes; I thank you—from my heart I thank you."

She took his arm and walked on, admiring the pleasant garden. The conversation then became general; with a few references now and then to political subjects, Garibaldi continued to entertain his guests with an easy courtesy of manner, and when, after a long visit, they bade him farewell, it was with a feeling of deep regret on their part, and an expression of gratitude on his.

The party returned to the Villa Bermondi, and during dinner, the conversation was much taken up with the remarkable man they had visited.

When Henri returned home, he was profuse in his thanks to the Rettore for his kind indulgence to him, and the latter renewed his recommendations of good conduct.

"Catch me, sir, ever again bringing a rum-bottle, or playing any other trick ; I've done with them."

"I am glad to hear it, Henri ; indeed I should be much mistaken if I ever had to punish you again."

"Thank you for your good opinion, sir ; good night."

"Good night, my dear boy."

CHAPTER XVII.

MUCH was the jealousy excited and many the criticisms passed on Henri de la Roche Ligné at the recreation, the day after he dined at Mr. Falconer's. *A favourite* was, however, the worst name they could give the boy, whose fine noble character and superior talents ensured him the admiration even of those who affected to look down on him. A small conspiracy was set afloat; no one would play with him; his ninepins lay arranged in their rows, untouched; his marbles, piled in tempting little heaps on the floor, attracted no playmate; he was reduced to the solitary amusement of playing at ball by himself; but after a few days' practice, he found this very irksome, and determined to put an end to it. With the brave air which became him so well, he thrust on his cap, and entering the circle of big boys, addressed the eldest, whom he knew to be the ringleader.

"What signifies this manœuvring? Why don't you come out in the face of day, and say, Henri, you have wronged us? You dare not, because you have behaved ill to me; you saw me punished for you; why did you allow it, since you alone deserved it? When the rettore found out the truth, he took me out with him; you all have a holiday with your parents, and I've a right to mine, and I will have it, and I'll take it, and all your jeering shan't prevent me. Now, I've only one observation to make to you, and that

is, if you want to vex me, I defy you. Not that I'll complain to the masters—I scorn that; but they'll soon find out which of us is to blame. If you wish to be *bons camarades*, I'll be the first to come forward; if you choose not to understand me, I mean not to stay long among you, so it's all one to me."

Everything is spontaneous in youth; malice, generosity, or envy—each are displayed without disguise, and with the same energy; young people rush with equal impetuosity into opposite extremes. For several days, each and all had behaved most unkindly to Henri; now all forgot he was a new boy, and at the close of his little harangue, there was such an applause, a shaking of hands, and even an embracing, such as had not been witnessed for a long time; not since the usher of the second class, to whom they had taken a mortal dislike, had found his coat torn, by being nailed to a bench; in a vehement rage, the gentleman pronounced himself worn out by continual revolts, and gave up his place. The rettore had come down, and reproaching the boys with their cruelty towards a poor man, who was henceforth deprived of the means of earning his bread, a bitter repentance had seized the band, who immediately getting up a subscription, had privately bought the unfortunate usher a new coat, and presented it to him, with a handsome apology.

Never, since that memorable event, had such a burst of feeling been displayed in the college as on this occasion. Henri saw he had discovered the best side of his companions, and responded to their enthusiasm with a warmth of feeling which was the surest way of making up. From that day his position in the school quite altered; he was

considered one of the head boys, and his activity at play being quite equivalent to his love for study, he grew to be quite as much regarded at the recreation as in the class. The rettore took care he should never go out but on the public holidays; so there could be no accusation of favouritism, and all became amicably settled.

About a month after he had dined at Mr. Falconer's, the boy rapped at the door of the rettore soon one morning, with an open and close-written letter in his hand.

"Come in," said a cheerful voice, which seemed as if the speaker were very busy; "oh! is it you, my dear boy?" he resumed, on recognizing his favourite pupil; "come in."

"Do I disturb you, sir?"

"I am casting up accounts; but do you sit down for a few moments, and I will be ready to hear you."

The boy went to the window, looked out, returned to the table, then to the window again, and finally resumed his first station at his master's table.

"You seem very restless, my child," said the latter, laying down his pen.

"Oh sir! I am so happy, I am trying to keep myself from jumping with joy."

"What is the matter?"

"My sister is ill, sir; she always was so, poor dear, but she's worse now."

"And that makes you glad?"

"This letter does, sir; look at the postscriptum in her dear pretty hand; doesn't it look unsteady and trembling?"

"My dear boy, I cannot make you out at all this morning."

"Oh! true, sir, I forgot the most necessary; the doctors have advised a change of air for Pauline, and they are coming, sir; she is coming to Nice; and papa writes to me to look out for a suitable apartment; and fancy my joy, sir; oh, fancy!"

"And I suppose I must give you a holiday for your search. Well! I certainly congratulate you on the approaching arrival of your family. As to-morrow will be Thursday, you may spend your afternoon in fulfilling your father's commission; and, let me see, I am afraid I can't go with you, but I will call on our neighbour, Mr. Falconer, for information; he will tell us which is the most advisable situation for your sister's delicate health. Doctors say the sea air is injurious to some constitutions; Mr. Falconer seems disposed to like you, and will, I doubt not, be happy to render you this assistance."

"I am very much obliged to you, sir, for I could hardly manage it all myself."

"Then go and finish your morning class."

The boy withdrew, applied to his studies with no small difficulty, owing to his mind being considerably occupied beforehand; and immediately after the twelve o'clock dinner, which he concluded with unusual expedition, he dressed, and was waiting for Don Maurizio, at the foot of the stairs.

"Go, my dear boy," said the indulgent rettore; "Mr. Falconer expects you, and has sent a carriage for you; good bye, I wish you a pleasant day."

The boy was overjoyed, and ascending the carriage, alighted a few minutes after at the Villa Bermondi.

Miss Falconer, with her bonnet on was waiting for him in the garden, and shook hands warmly

with her little friend. "Oh! you need not tell me," she said; "Don Maurizio was here half an hour ago, and informed us of the great pleasure you expect. Papa is delighted to help you in the search, and I am going with you too; it will be quite a party of pleasure."

"Pauline desires me to thank you," replied the boy, "for the kind messages I conveyed to her from you, in my last letter; and I must tell you something, he added, in a low voice; I did not like to mention it, for they would call it a sick girl's fancy. I sent Pauline, a short time ago, a few prints of Nice, and here is what she adds to papa's letter: 'Henri, I have a wish, a longing wish, to live near that abbey of Cimiez you sent me the picture of, could you find me a house in that direction. I am glad, very glad, to come to Nice, and see my dear little brother again, but feel I have not long to live; I wish to be reminded of God, and to render myself worthy of going to him soon; I think it would make me better to live near a convent; and if I die, I would like to be buried in that old abbey, which may chance to be visited one day by those who have loved me.'"

"Oh! do not," said Immacolata, folding the letter quickly—"do not show that to any one. Poor Pauline! how I will love her; is she wont to talk in that melancholy strain?"

"No, indeed! it is new to her; but I spoke to her a great deal of you."

"How is that? you do not know me," said Immacolata, colouring.

"Well, perhaps not; but the last day I was here with you, you told me something I repeated to Pauline. Oh! I am sure you will do her much

good; may I tell her she will find in you a friend?"

"Say a sister if she need one; for I feel that I know and understand her already."

"Not yet; but you will soon; thank you, mademoiselle."

Mr. Falconer appearing at the same moment, Henri sprang forward to express his gratitude.

"You needn't thank me, my boy; it will be a pleasant ride for us, as well as for you. Where shall we go first? The Promenade des Anglais I consider rather too noisy for an invalid; the wind blows there, and for a person in your sister's weak state, the sea air would prove trying to the nerves."

"Papa, suppose we try the Cimiez road? I should have preferred having Henri's family as neighbours, but we must consider the invalid first, and no air can be better than that of Cimiez."

"Then please, sir, shall we go there?" said the boy, turning a grateful look on the young lady.

Mr. Falconer gave his orders accordingly.

The road which leads up to this hill, formerly a Roman town, and the rival of Nice, is a favourite and much-frequented walk. We would certainly prefer it, were the scenery open to view; but stones happened to be so plentiful on the road, ruined edifices had left so many huge fragments, that, in process of time, the old Roman bricks were raised anew to portion out different limits of farms and properties, and ended by forming two boundary-walls from the bottom to the top of the hill.

Unpleasant though it be to have the view limited, it has an antique air about it—that old wall, which suits well the memories of Cimella.

Flowers had clung to it with the tenacious love their country bears to ruins; geraniums have grown on it till their stems have reached the thickness of young trees, and the graceful caper-plant stretches its long branches and large white flowers over the rugged surface, like a young heart faithful to an old and tried love.

Our party found it a pleasant drive; often interrupted by their alighting at different garden gates, and going over the houses and grounds within. There was no end to Henri's delight, or to the frolics by which he showed it; now jumping over a hedge, and disappearing in the leafy branches of a tree, making his appearance anew to slide down a green bank; nor did he disdain, in spite of his good manners and tight-fitting uniform, to try a few somersets upon the grass in a garden, which particularly struck his fancy.

"This is the house I like the best, sir," he said to Mr. Falconer, as that gentleman called him back to the business of the day.

"My dear boy, you have repeated that eight times within the last two hours; we have, indeed, seen many pretty and even some comfortable abodes; but let us see all that is within our reach, and then make our choice quietly, *à tête reposée*."

Immacolata laughed heartily, for Henri, balancing his head playfully, seemed to entertain doubts as to its ever getting *posé* again.

The coachman appeared once more at the carriage window, inquiring whether they would like to see the amphitheatre.

"Oh, by all means," cried Miss Falconer, and was the first to alight. "But do you know, papa,

this man must be of Roman descent, and subject to occasional fits of hallucination ; there is nothing here but the dusty road."

"Look up, Ima ; the arch you are standing in, and which shows off your pretty figure to advantage, is an ancient vomitoria ; these strong walls served either as an entrance, or more likely to encage the ferocious animals preparatory to the combat ; and, look over this low parapet ; there are the steps serving as seats, the circular enclosure, and the arena ; it is indeed wonderfully well preserved. A violent temptation steals over me sometimes to buy a spot of ground in this country, and this is exactly where I would fain pitch my tent. I am afraid that unless some lover of the antique takes to cherish this really remarkable ruin, it will give way to the invasion of the spade and plough."

Immacolata was stooping over the wall and listening with deep interest to all her father's explanations, when the coachman came up and begged to ask where the young gentleman had run away, like one possessed.

"We thought he was here," they exclaimed.

Mr. Falconer called him several times ; but receiving no answer, "He will lose his way," he said, "poor boy, and get punished at school for returning home late ; it was very foolish of him ; poor fellow, he is so excited with his day's holiday."

The coachman could not leave his horses to go after him, but whistled to some peasants in the adjoining fields, and was going to engage them in the search, when the boy reappeared, out of breath, and bearing a branch of the gaggia-tree, thickly laden with Miss Falconer's favourite

flower: "Here," he said, "I climbed up a tree for this, and could consequently see down the other side of the hill; it looked so inviting, I thought I should have time to take a run in that direction, and be back before you had done looking here."

"Quite forgetting you were under my guardianship," rejoined Mr. Falconer.

"Oh please, sir, do come to it. Mademoiselle, it is such a view, so different from any you have yet seen. We must first pass the old Gothic church, which you don't know, and then—in short, you have seen nothing yet, sir."

"That's information, certainly."

"Do please, sir, come just to an olive grove I've discovered, where there's no carriage-road; but that's no matter."

"Of course, not to such veteran legs as yours; but Ima is tired to death."

"No, indeed, papa; I think a little walk will arouse me."

The coachman coming forward to receive his orders, "Take us first to the Piazza, before the old church," said the boy, "we will alight there."

The man did as he was directed; then, pleased at his success as Cicerone: "This, signori and signorina," he began, "is a remarkable old church, which all strangers come to visit; the first sanctuary ever erected to the Madonna, and formerly a heathen temple."

Immacolata looked anxious to enter it. "Oh, never mind for to-day," exclaimed the boy; "come my way, and you'll see if you're not obliged to me." So saying, he walked on very fast, holding Miss Falconer by the hand, who,

laughing and remonstrating by turns, was led by the boy to the brow of the hill, where he folded his arms, and, looking at her triumphantly, "There, mademoiselle, I call that grand!"

"You are right," she replied. "Go back for papa; he'll enjoy it."

There was a rock at her feet, so covered with wild thyme that it seemed a green mound of earth; she sat down, waiting for her father. Before her undulated the hills, of which every one is so familiar to the inhabitant of Nice, that she had, long ere this, learned to know the name of each, and the part they had played in the history of the country. Each was cultivated, and partitioned into olive groves at its base, displaying higher up its rocky sides and granite foundations, and then again, overshadowed at the top by forests of pines of a dark-green hue; and the sun played in those clefts of the rocks, and in those groves, bestowing on them a variety of hue, which was in itself a study of beauty. There was Mount Boren, with its old shattered fortress; beyond that another hill, inclining to the sea, which was so distant as to be hardly visible, save that in the glittering reflection from that azure mirror one recognized the clear blue waters of the Mediterranean. And there, from that blue horizon, rose Nice, formerly the most impregnable of all European ports: the hill which bears it is in the shape of a diadem. Is it for Italy a prophecy, a hope, or a memory of the past?

"Papa," exclaimed Miss Falconer to her father, who was now standing behind her, "you will put this upon canvas, will you not?"

"I am silently admiring Henri's taste for discovery; you must become an artist, my boy."

"Yes, sir," replied Henri, his eyes glistening, "I feel I can," and he seized his friend's hand.

The hill, on the verge of which they were standing, gradually sloped down to the high road, which bordered a river, or rather torrent, as the old country language designates it; its windings through the valley were numerous and pleasant to look on. Following its course to the left, the eye rested on a long range of buildings, attached to a church, the colonnade and steeple of which seemed of much older date than the remainder of the structure; ruined arches were visible around it, and all seemed to designate an abbey of the middle ages, mouldered away by the hand of time, and roused from its ruins.

"That," said Henri, "must be the convent of St. Pons; I have read of it in the guide-book, but have never walked so far with my school-fellows; it belonged formerly to the Benedictines, and Charlemagne slept there on his return from Italy. Oh! sir, I'm sure my father and Pauline would like this situation; the road to town is a beautiful one, so flat, and much easier than that of Cimella. Mademoiselle, what do you think?"

"I! oh, I can say nothing. That abbey is so like my convent, that I love the very look of it, and you must leave me here to enjoy my recollections, while you continue your search. Will you go with him papa? I will await your return."

They left her, and were absent a quarter of an hour. When they returned, her head was bowed down, and her hands clasped; the memory of her childish days had brought back to her holy and solemn thoughts, and she had poured out her soul in prayer. Henri had run back all the way at full speed, and was bursting on her with an

exclamation of joy, when he saw her posture, and stopped at a little distance. She had heard him, however, and rising, with a heightened colour in her cheek, but with her own pleasant smile,—

“Well!” she said, “what have you seen?”

“Oh! mademoiselle, just what will suit; a house Pauline will love, and I’ve chosen her room, which has two windows; one looking out on this view, the other towards Cimiez; just what she wished, you see; oh! I am so glad.”

“How very expeditious! Is it true, papa?” she asked, as her father came up.

“Why yes, dear, this energetic friend of mine is decided; and there are so many comforts about the place, I think it will suit. I would take you back there, but the sun is so very near setting, that I fear the change of temperature for you; you must go home. Henri, bid the carriage come as near as it can; we shall go and meet it.”

The boy ran off, with his wonted alacrity, and a few minutes after the carriage was wending its way down the hill.

There was so much talk and merriment going on, that it was not till they were near home that Mr. Falconer finding on the seat beside him the Nice newspaper which he had left there in the morning, “I declare,” he exclaimed, “this two-sous paper was put into my hand when we were leaving home, and I have not opened it yet, you two young people have kept me so very busy.”

“Then please, papa, look over it now, and we will be very quiet.”

“Oh! as to that matter, talk away; there is nothing very absorbing here, only local news. Oh! Nouvelles de Cannes,” he exclaimed, glancing over the last column, and he continued in a

sorrowful tone: "Poor lady, I must go and see her to-morrow."

"What is it, papa; anybody you know?"

"Yes; you of course remember our meeting Rachel on the road."

"Oh! I shall not forget her easily."

"She is growing worse daily, and a painful operation has been performed, in order to help her breathing; I intended going to call on her, but I see now I must no longer put it off."

"Poor thing! she interested me very much. I should like to send her something as a remembrance; I will make her a nosegay as soon as I get home; flowers are pleasant in a sick-room."

At that moment they were passing the bridge, and the sound of cannon came sweeping through the river Paillon, re-echoed at the same moment from the Nice château.

"Hark!" said Henri, starting up; "what can that mean? How I love that sound!"

"It is perhaps the anniversary of some popular fête," suggested Mr. Falconer.

"Then there'll be fireworks this evening," interposed the boy. "Oh! please, sir, don't send me back to school yet."

"Listen to me, my boy. My compliance with your request would be most imprudent, and endanger the safety of your future holidays; fix your mind rather on what you have to do; you must write an answer to your father; he entrusted you with a commission, and you ought to tell him how you have executed it."

"Very true, sir; how lucky you reminded me, and the post goes out to-morrow morning at seven."

"I would willingly add a few lines to your

letter, but I will not delay ; I am, besides, going to Cannes in the morning, so will wish you good bye now, for we are close to home."

"Good bye, sir, and many thanks."

"Good bye," added Immacolata ; "tell your sister I expect her anxiously."

"Never fear ! Mademoiselle, I will give her even a longer message than you send."

"And what is that?"

"Oh ! *I* know," and he skipped out, and went his way back to school.

"A funny, good boy, that," said Mr. Falconer, looking after him. "Go into the house, my love, while I give orders to the coachman to come for me to-morrow."

Miss Falconer rang the bell of the garden gate, and her maid came running out.

"Dear lady," she said, "how long you have been ; I have been watching for you the last half-hour, and cook is quite anxious, for she has made an English pie for *il signore*, which she's afraid will be spoiled."

"Well ! it is our own fault, Lucrezia ; and as we are both very hungry, I dare say we shall not mind. Oh ! how full of flowers the garden is, I wish you to pick a great many for me ; of that particularly," she added, pointing to a *gaggià*-tree.

"I have perceived the signorina loves that flower, and never allow any one to take it but for the signorina's room ; is it a large bouquet I am to provide for ?"

"Yes."

"And would you permit me to make it in the fashion of my country ? The Riviera has a reputation for making nosegays."

"Oh! do, then; I should like it to be particularly pretty."

"Is it for an offering, signora; shall I get it blessed?"

"Blessed!" repeated Immacolata, hesitating; "certainly; I wish it to bring a blessing on her to whom it is destined; it is for a sick person, Lucrezia."

"Indeed! oh, then I will put a medal among the flowers, and the Madonna will bring her health and resignation."

"Oh, no!" exclaimed Miss Falconer, "you must not do that; the sick lady is not a Christian."

"Oh," said the girl, with a sigh which came from her heart, "poor, poor lady, she does not love the Madonna, how unhappy she must be!"

"I am afraid she is, Lucrezia; we must pity her, and thank God that he has been so merciful to us, and pray for others."

"Oh yes, lady, and I have something to ask of you; will you hear me?"

"Not now, I hear papa's voice in the dining-room; I must go to dinner, but I will come back immediately after."

She ran down stairs; the girl followed her, and returned soon after to her young mistress's room, with a huge apronful of flowers; she filled a vase on the chimney-piece, and then laying her burden on the floor, knelt down by the side of it, and began her work by dividing the flowers into a number of small nosegays, each of which had a certain number of similar colours. The occupation seemed to recall a long train of thoughts, for interjections in her native tongue would sometimes cross her lips, and she now and

then put her hands to her eyes, and when her work was completed, she laid it by her on the floor, and wept outright. At the end of an hour, the door opened, but so gently that the girl was not disturbed from her position; Miss Falconer entered, and called her by her name.

"Oh, my dear mistress," she said, starting up, "I beg pardon, I did not hear you."

"You have executed your task admirably," said Miss Falconer, taking up the beautiful nose-gay, equalling in size a small round table, "but I am sorry to see you thus; has anything new distressed you?"

"Oh, no! dear lady."

"You had something to say to me, will you tell it me now?"

"It is," and her tears flowed afresh, "could the signora dispense with my services to-morrow? The cook has promised to do my part of the work, if the signora will permit me to spend the day out."

"I have no objection; papa will not be at home, and I can easily dress myself; where are you going to?"

"To-morrow," said the girl, now drying her eyes and resuming her usual quiet manner, "is the anniversary of the day it pleased God to afflict me, and I would fain perform the pilgrimage with which I, each year, solemnize the day. To-morrow, too, is the *fête* of the Madonna, as the signorina heard announced by the cannon of this evening."

"I did not know what that meant."

"The Madonna of Larchetto is such a favourite, that on her *fêtes* many persons come from France to honour her at her shrine, and in, order to favour

the pilgrims, the gates of the Pont du Var, which is the barrier between the two countries, are thrown open for three days, leaving people the time to go and return without a passport, and the opening of the bridge is announced by cannon. Oh, lady, it is so beautiful to see the church thronged on such days."

"I do not doubt it, and you have excited in me a violent wish to go with you; I think I would, had not papa made other arrangements for to-morrow. I am glad you have told me of this, for see, here is a little purchase I have made for you;" and opening a drawer, she took out a brown dress of light materials, neatly folded up. See, Lucrezia, I have been scrupulously exact as to the colour."

"Thank you, dear lady, you have indeed; but it is much finer and more beautiful than what I am accustomed to wear; I am so much obliged to you, so pleased to put it on new for the Madonna."

"I am glad you like it, Lucrezia. Go now; you will require rest before beginning your journey. Pray for me at Laghetto; ask the Blessed Virgin to give me what she knows I wish for most."

"I will, dear lady; good night. Please to give me your bouquet, that I may put it out in the open air to keep fresh:" and she withdrew.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"My dear girl!" exclaimed Mr. Falconer, as Immacolata ran after him on the staircase the following morning, with her nosegay in her hand, "you don't mean to say I am to be the happy bearer of this colossal exhibition. Why, you should have given me a hint as to the size, and I would have hired a page to carry it."

"It is beautiful, isn't it, papa? all Lucrezia's manufacture. Take hold of it—'tis very light."

"It will take up three-quarters of the carriage, that's as far as I see."

"Then 'twill hold my place, papa;" and she touched the centre, where a large collection of gaggiàs displayed their golden tufts.

"Is that to reconcile me to my load? Very well, dear."

"Good bye, papa. Say everything kind from me; my best wishes for her recovery."

"I will, dear, unless I find her too ill. Good bye."

So saying, he stooped down and kissed her fondly. She remained looking after him till he was out of sight. He bid the coachman drive to the Pont du Var, cross it, and go to Cannet, at a short distance from Cannes, where Rachel was known to have taken up her abode.

The great tragedian was, indeed, paying the penalty of her genius; the finest natures are the most prone to suffering and decline: the sooner a

human thing has approached maturity, the nearer it is to its decay.

Mr. Falconer was grieved when, on entering the unpleasant garden, surrounded by high walls of the Villa S——, he met Mademoiselle Sarah, the artist's favourite sister, and read on her downcast countenance that Rachel's fate was sealed. The lady recognized him and welcomed him.

"Please to sit here for a little while," she said, "while my poor sick one sleeps. I hardly leave her night or day, and have come out to breathe the fresh air while she takes a little rest. I must keep up my strength for her sake."

"I thought," said Mr. Falconer, "the medical treatment she has been subject to had proved beneficial to her, and that her doctor had performed an operation."

"Ah, sir, I shudder to think of it," and she covered her face with her hands. "I should not have permitted it: she suffered very much, and, I fear me, it has hastened what we all dread."

"Do not be discouraged, madam; there are so many resources in nature."

"Yes, sir, when the frame has not been overtasked; when it has long known that wholesome repose of mind which carries the freshness of youth with it till it is crowned with the calm maturity of age, then I believe it. Nature will assert her rights; but, alas! what a career of fatigue and exertion hers has been! How dearly is glory purchased at the expense of life! I hear her bell; I will announce you, sir. I doubt not your kind visit will prove a great pleasure to her."

Mr. Falconer tendered his card, and the huge

nosegay, at which she smiled, and said—"I will return in a moment."

She reappeared shortly on the threshold, and beckoned to Mr. Falconer, who followed her in silence.

The room into which he was ushered was very large and airy, and furnished with extreme plainness. White muslin curtains fell over the bed on which lay the woman whom thousands had crowded to gaze on and applaud, now expiring in a remote corner of the world, with scarce a witness to her last sigh. The apartment was so darkened, that Mr. Falconer could at first hardly see where to direct his steps.

"*Ici, monsieur,*" said the invalid in a voice so faint, that it hardly rose above a whisper, "let me thank you for your kind attention. I am somewhat worse than when we met last; and this," she said, touching the flowers which had been laid on her bed, "you brought it."

"It is an offering from my daughter, who is much grieved to hear of the state of your health."

"Ah! I remember her; the dear girl who helped me out of a fainting fit on the road. She is beautiful, and this is from her. How amiable! Tell her I have received many gifts in the course of my professional career, more than would fill this room perhaps; but this is the first which brings with it a new and deep feeling,—the first I have received from an innocent heart."

"Let me take it away, Rachel," said her sister; "the perfume of these flowers is too strong for you."

"Nay, dear sister, leave it; they remind me of gardens and fresh air beyond these walls, which I have not seen for long, and, perhaps——" She

did not conclude, for her sister's eyes, full of tears, met hers. "Poor Sarah! how good you have been to me." Then, fatigued by this short conversation, she lay back her head on the pillows, closed her eyes for a few minutes, then, rising with a sudden start, she turned to Mr. Falconer: "I thought I was visited by your daughter's angel face; of what religion is she?"

"A Catholic."

"Ah! I thought so;"—and she was silent again. "'Tis strange!" she resumed,—“how many thoughts come into my poor brain to-day—thoughts that do not weary me. I feel strong; I see again the days of my childhood, our *début* in the Café Chantant; do you remember, Sarah? Days of poverty those, to be exchanged soon after for fortune and renown! Oh, what a joy it was to me to raise my family; to see them all around me, rich and happy, and to know they owed it all to me. Nothing was wanting to me. I have drunk deep of the cup of pleasure, and yet, at times, when my triumph was greatest, when I had reaped adulation from society, I have sat down and mourned that my fate was not that of an obscure village maiden, peaceful in her simplicity, happy as a wife and as a mother. Alas! sir, how often, in the brightest visions of genius, do we meet the shadow which darkens our path, and reminds us we are but mortal! It was not that I dreaded rivalry: few have ever dared to contend with Rachel. True, she who has carried the fame of Maria Stuarda over the world, has by some been compared to me. Do you know,” she continued, stopping a moment and then resuming, “I think what makes that part so easy to her is because she is a Catholic, and feels most in the

scenes where the royal victim appeals to her faith. 'Tis strange how sensible I am, too, to unaffected piety and goodness. I loved the Queen Marie Amélie, who was kind to me; and since her I have remarked that all those in whom I discovered something to love have been Catholics: your daughter is the last. Were I less ailing, I would have wished to hear her speak of religion; I have heard that it gives happiness to those who are sincere."

"I think so," said Mr. Falconer; "I see it in my dear girl; her religion seems to give her a calm, quiet enjoyment. I almost fear that, from sheer admiration of her, I shall awake a Catholic one of these days."

"I have never practised any religion," resumed the actress; "I suppose I am a Jewess, as I was born one. I believe Jehovah has promised much to my people, but I know not how I have never thought about it. Strange ideas come to me to-day, I know not how."

"Rachel," interrupted her sister, "you are exhausting your strength; you have not spoken so much for weeks."

"True," she said; "but it is strange I breathe so freely."

"Then do not waste this little amelioration."

A rap at the door called out Sarah, who, returning shortly, with a visible embarrassment in her manner: "Sister," she said, "Mr. Avigdor is outside: "and as, the last time he was here, you expressed a wish to see the Rabbi of Nice, he has brought him with him."

"Ah!" exclaimed the sufferer, with a greater expression of sadness than she had yet shown, "very well; let them come in."

Mr. Falconer rose to depart.

"I would fain see you again," she said, holding out her hand to him; "will you stay long at Cannet?"

"I came purposely to pay my respects to you, madam."

"Thank you; then let me see you again when they are gone."

"I will wait till then," he said; "good bye!" He let go her hand; its touch was cold and clammy.

"Tell your daughter," she said; but a sudden oppression impeded her further utterance. Mr. Falconer made a sign that he understood, and withdrew. When at the door, he turned back to look upon her; her eyes, large and glassy, were fixed on him with that gaze which changes no more.

About an hour elapsed; Mr. Falconer had left the house and returned; he was told the Jewish minister was still with her; he resolved to wait a little longer before taking his departure.

More time passed, and the day being far advanced, he rose to return to Nice; when the door of the sick chamber opened, the rabbi and his assistants issued from it, followed by Mr. Avigdor, president of the Israelite Club of Nice. He held a paper in his hand, of which the writing was not yet dry: "It is over!" he said to the few persons present, whose silence expressed their anxiety. The master of the house inquired what formalities had to be fulfilled.

"Let none approach her," said the rabbi; "none enter her room again till the last duties be performed to her by the women of her race; they followed me from Nice, and must be now

close at hand. Mr. Avigdor, our task is done, we will return with you."

Mr. Falconer followed them, entered his own carriage, and pursued the same road. He had fallen into a train of thought, which was only interrupted by his alighting at his own door. It was late, and his daughter had retired to rest.

She sought his room early the next morning, and perceived he had already gone down stairs; she entered the dining-room, and found him reading the newspaper so attentively that he did not turn his head at her approach; she embraced him, as was her wont, and saw from his countenance that he was much moved. She looked at the head of a paragraph he was reading in the Nice newspaper, and uttered an exclamation of surprise and sorrow; she sat down by her father's side, who gave her a lengthened account of the death-scene he had witnessed the day before. "And these," he resumed, taking up the newspaper,—“these lines, inserted at Mr. Avigdor's request, coincide strangely with her last words to me; there was a mysterious dawn of faith in that poor spirit at her last hour.”

Immacolata's eye ran over the part his finger pointed out: "It having been rumoured," stated the paragraph, "that Mdlle. Rachel had thought of turning Catholic, she places in the hands of Mr. Avigdor a written declaration, stating that she dies, as she has lived, in the Jewish religion." Miss Falconer sighed, and took her place at the breakfast-table; the melancholy subject seemed to occupy the thoughts of both, for a silence of some length ensued, which was interrupted by Mr. Falconer's inquiring abruptly: "Did you pray for Rachel, Ima?"

She expected to see him smile at her reply, but answered quietly, "Yes, papa."

"I believe in the efficacy of intercession," he said, with much seriousness; "do you offer it for me, dear girl?"

"Oh, papa, daily; I may almost say, hourly."

"Don't give it up, dear; and I should like, not now, but in some time hence, to have a talk with you."

Immacolata did not answer, she did not trust herself to look up, lest her radiant face might betray the deep joy she felt; but it was not enough; she felt her father's words were a pledge of what would follow, and she soon withdrew from the breakfast-table to pour out in the silence of her own room her thanksgiving to God. It is never wasted, that tribute of love or petition for mercy which ascends before the heavenly throne, although sometimes we, whose view is so short, imagine all is lost because the exact object of our desires has not been attained. Immacolata had prayed for the lost daughter of Israel, and that petition had descended full of grace on the head of her father.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE first streak of dawn was scarcely visible on the horizon, and many windows on the sea-coast were lighted from within, bearing witness to the early habits of their inmates; the college we have already spoken of was lit on every story, from the kitchen to the dormitory, and the youths, who had been already at study for the last hour and a half, showed, by their repeated yawns and much rubbing of the hands, that, in their opinion, the winter season did not admit of such early rising, and that they expected prompt compensation in a warm breakfast. A bell soon announced the serving of that pleasant meal, and the readiness with which books were flung away, and the young gentlemen stood up, in their accustomed rank-and-file order, sufficiently proved to the professor, if, indeed, he had not already ascertained the fact, that their thirst for learning was very second rate.

One boy, however, of the second division, instead of obeying the pleasant summons to the refectory, rushed out to the landing-place, which terminated the first flight of the staircase, and, fixing a small pocket-telescope, looked through it with breathless anxiety. A whole half-hour elapsed; the clatter of cups and spoons subsided, still the boy did not move. At length, his gaze grew more intense; he uttered a short cry, put up his instrument, and rushed down the steps

with extended arms: "It is! it is!" he cried. His headlong flight was stopped by a priest, who was coming up, and who, seizing him by the shoulders: "My dear boy," he said, "moderate your exuberant spirits."

"Oh, Signor Rettore, it is the steamboat; look yourself; come and see, they will soon be here. Oh, sir, I can't be quiet; it's of no use trying, I'm so glad."

"You can't hasten the wind and the waves, you know, my boy; and the boat cannot be in port before an hour and a half. Have you had your breakfast?"

"No, sir; I forgot."

"And the hour is past; come to my room, then, and we will take our coffee together. Oh, never fear!" he added, as the boy continued looking back; "you will have a better view from my window. I will give you a superior telescope to that."

Henri yielded to his master's kind offer, but another half-hour found him again at his post of observation: this time he was on the beach, and Mr. Falconer and his daughter were sharers in his expectation. Long before the recognized time, Henri had pushed into a boat, and was the first by the vessel's side; he returned on shore with a gentleman and a young lady, who reclined on the cushions, and only raised her veil when she was handed on shore. Mr. Falconer carried her up the steep steps to the quay. Immacolata received her, and, embracing her, addressed her in French: "Oh, is it you?" said the girl, a pleased smile overspreading her sickly features; "I know you. Henri told me how good and kind you are."

The two gentlemen shook hands, and Henri, the link between them, was bewildered with joy.

"Go, my boy," said Mr. Falconer; "put your sister into that carriage which I have provided, and when you have made the round of the port with the young ladies, come and meet your father and myself at the custom-house."

The boy obeyed, and, business being soon despatched, all the party proceeded together to the house in the country, which Henri had chosen a week before. M. de la Roche Ligné displayed, in his manners and conversation, all the characteristics of perfect good breeding; but the distinguishing feature of his character seemed to be the very reverse of amiability. He was a hard-featured, stern man, and his children's manner towards him was respectful and devoid of familiarity. Their affection seemed concentrated in each other, and as Henri sat opposite his sister, stooping towards her, and his hand locked in hers, he seemed to divine her very thoughts, and to need no words of hers to express them. She looked so ill, poor girl, that little hope, if any, could be left in her deep, sunken eyes, rendered more expressive by the violet circle which surrounded them, and the thin hollow cheeks, which spoke of gradual and consuming decay. She had been pretty, poor Pauline! but the fresh colour and smiles of youth, the roundness of form, all had disappeared under the hand of sickness, and her young frame was fast sinking. Immacolata was shocked to see her so much worse than she had expected, and caressed her often and fondly with a warmth of feeling, which seemed to the young invalid a powerful restorative: "*Que vous me faites du bien!*" she whispered several times.

M. de la Roche Ligné looked out of the window almost all the time. "This is at some distance from town," he said, "which I rather prefer; quiet is the best thing for a sick person, and I do not wish to make any acquaintances among the people of this country."

"I am glad you like the situation," said Mr. Falconer, Henri was so anxious to please you. There is the house, half-way up the hill; we might now alight and walk to it in a straight line, but the ascent would fatigue mademoiselle; we had better take the flat road, although the longest."

Pauline looked out of the window too, exchanged an intelligent glance with her brother, and seemed much pleased. At the appointed place they got down: it was a pleasant lane which led to the house, shaded by trees on one side, and bordered on the other by a wall, covered almost from the top to the bottom by cape-plants.

"Oh how beautiful!" exclaimed Mademoiselle de la Roche Ligné. Henri had foreseen her admiration, and presented her with a bunch of the graceful, odoriferous flower, then taking her arm,

"Lean on me, Pauline; I am tall now." She gave her other arm to Miss Falconer, and thus walked on slowly. "How reviving this air is," she said, "how pleasant!"

The gentlemen, who walked faster, passed them.

"An old abbey, that," said Mr. Falconer, as his companion looked down on the convent of St. Pons.

"Ah!" said the gentleman, a slight cloud passing over his brow; "by what order of monks is it inhabited?"

"Oh, not by monks," replied Mr. Falconer;

"it belongs to the bishop, and is a place of resort for priests." The gentleman seemed more satisfied and passed on.

"Pauline," whispered her brother, "monks from all parts stop there, when travelling through this country; *he* may come."

The girl's eyes beamed for a moment, then, turning to Immacolata: "I beg you will excuse my brother's whispering," she said, "it is so long since we have met."

"Oh pray, do not mind me; I am so glad to see you enjoy each other's society again; he is, I know, a very affectionate brother."

"You have been good, very good to him, and you will be the same to me, I know, for so he has promised me."

"I do wish, with all my heart, to do what I can in order to make you comfortable and happy here; Henri will direct me, I hope, for he knows your tastes: come up to your room at once; it is your brother's choice."

She gently led them up the staircase, and as the boy left them at the bedroom door, Immacolata put her two arms round her and supported her to the sofa, where she laid her at full length; then wheeled it to the window: "Look out!" she said. The girl did so, and inhaled the breeze which the olive-groves wafted towards her; she turned round, and perceived her companion's eyes fixed on her with an affectionate anxiety: "Come nearer to me, will you?" she said. Miss Falconer stooped over her, and the weary head rested on her bosom. She retained her attitude some minutes, for she perceived by the invalid's stifled breathing that she was weeping. At length she gently disengaged herself, sat down,

and taking the girl's hands in her own: "Will you speak to me?" she said; "do you think it will do you good?"

"Oh, yes! I am longing to do so. I know I should let a few days elapse; but my strength may fail me later; and I feel, when you know what I have suffered, you will love me more."

"I love you already, Pauline, and only fear for you the fatigue and excitement of talking; but if it be a comfort, I will not prevent you; let me first go and see if your maid has arrived, and give some orders; I will come back directly."

She left the room: on her return, she found the sick girl in a reclining attitude; her arm was on the window-sill, and her head resting on it.

"Each of these windows," she observed, "looks out on a different convent."

"Yes; rather solemn, is it not? but your brother said you would like it."

"Henri always knows exactly what I wish; he is so clever and so good; mademoiselle, will you allow me to call you by your name?"

"I told Henri I would receive you as a sister; did he fail in that message?—my name is Immacolata."

"I know it! and can you guess why my wish to come to Nice has grown in me to the height of a fever. I dared not ask papa, but whispered it to the kind doctor who attended me, and who managed it all; I wished to come, because I wanted to know you."

"To know me?"

"Yes! since Henri told me you were acquainted with a Dominican monk of the name of Del Monti, I felt that I must see you before I die."

Miss Falconer was speechless from amazement.

and confusion of ideas: "I knew him," continued Pauline, "when his thoughts were far removed from a monk's life. I had a friend in Avignon with whom I used to spend much of my time; one day I met at her house an Italian cousin of hers, who was come on a visit; I was learning Italian at the time, my friend told him so, and he spoke to me; I was timid, but he was so gentle, so good, and so handsome. I was told he had admired me, and from that day I met him wherever I went, at every ball, on every promenade, and I liked him more and more. At last, I believe my father sent for him, and bade him desist from his attentions. I never heard exactly how it happened; but one day I was alone in the church at Avignon, a sacristan came to me, and desired me to follow him to the sacristy, where somebody wanted to speak to me; I did so, and, on entering, was seized with a fear and trembling from head to foot, for *he* was there.

" 'Our meeting is a farewell,' he said, 'and from the sanctity of this place you may understand how elevated and pure is my love for you. I have sued for you, Pauline, and been refused; I have persevered, and met from your father a mortifying repulse; I will now weary you no longer with a useless love; try to forget me.'

"I said I would be a dutiful daughter, but I could not command my heart.

" 'Then seek your comfort,' he said, 'where I will look for mine; let us turn our love to God.'

"I was overcome with grief, but his words gave me strength. I wore round my neck a crucifix of carved ivory, a gift of my poor mother; I took it off and gave it him: 'Bear with you always,' I said, 'this souvenir of Pauline, let it never leave

you more.' The beautiful image was wet with my tears; he approached it to his lips:

" 'Here will I seek you,' he said, ' here the traces of your prayers and of your tears; we can never meet again but in prayer; Pauline, farewell! I must not keep you longer, lest your father should hear of our interview.'

" I wept so violently, that I could not stir; he took me by the hand, led me to a chair in the church, then disappeared by a side-door; I never saw him more. You understand all now, Immacolata? "

" I do, I do; oh! my poor, dear friend, and is it this which has brought you so low? Could you not conquer it, and raise your heart to God, as he has done? "

Pauline shook her head.

" You have acted wrong in giving way so much as this; you must be more courageous; you must seek for comfort, for amusement, and recover."

" It is too late," said the sick girl, with a faint smile; " yet, there is one comfort—yes, which you could give me."

" Oh! tell me what it is? "

" Would you write to him, only to know how he is, and where? "

" I write! my dear girl, compose yourself; you are dreaming. But stay," she resumed quickly, seeing the heavy cloud of disappointment which overshadowed the face of her young companion, " I will reflect; I will consult papa, and if it can be done, I will—"

" Oh! " said the girl, alarmed, " your father; what! you will not surely speak to your father? "

" Do not be alarmed, I will not tell papa your secret; but he is so clever, he is sure to find out

where *he* is, and I could ask him to write; but, Pauline, you ought not to think of him so much; he belongs to God, and would you rob the Almighty of his own?"

"Oh! I know I require to become better; but it was not God who forbade my union with Alberto; God is kind and merciful! God's blessing is invoked on marriages. Oh! it was not the Almighty who tried me, it was——"

"Hush, dear! there is not an event of our lives which is not ordained by God. Do not murmur; all we suffer can be directed to His greater glory; you could only have bestowed on Alberto an earthly love and an earthly happiness; God has called him to that which is immortal. When you meet before the last judgment-seat, perhaps you will find that this trial has obtained for him the glorious destiny of a saint; and for you too, if you choose," she added, smiling.

Pauline looked as if that ambition were very far removed from her.

The entrance of a servant, bringing in a cup of soup to her mistress, put a stop to the conversation, which Miss Falconer was rather glad of, as she found the task of consoling her companion by no means an easy one. The effects of this disclosure were, however, quite beneficial to Pauline; her mind was unburdened, she looked calm and happy; the change of scene, the pleasant air, brought round her appetite, and a slight bloom reappeared on her cheeks. All were pleased at this happy change; and Henri, who only went as a day scholar now to the college, used to declare "his sister improved every twenty-four hours." Miss Falconer would drive over to St. Pons every afternoon, and sometimes spend the night there.

M. de la Roche Ligné could not but be grateful to Mr. Falconer for his continued kindness and attentions, and he gradually became friendly, and showed a decided liking for his society. He was likewise Henri's great friend, and Pauline felt thankful to him, both for that, and because her father, amused and interested by his new acquaintance, preserved for days together an unwonted equanimity of temper.

"How good you are, Mr. Falconer," she said to him one day; "you make all around you happy."

"I wish I could do that for you, my dear young lady, I should then be an able doctor."

"What do you mean? Who told you?"

"I am a physiognomist, Mademoiselle Pauline, and I think you hide something from us which is at the root of your complaint."

"Has Immacolata been speaking to you?"

"No; but when I observed to her how much better you look, she said she wished I would talk to you, and obtain your confidence, and that I could help you a great deal."

"Can you, sir?" she asked, and her eyes assumed for a moment the innocent joyousness of childhood. "Oh yes! you are so good; well, say to Immacolata I wish her to tell you all; everything I have ever said to her."

"That will take a very long time. I shall be satisfied with a part, but you will not have to repent your trust; count on my friendship—good bye."

The next day a French doctor, residing in Nice, came with Mr. Falconer to see the young lady, and gave his opinion as to the progress of her complaint. He stayed a long time by her bedside;

observed her breathing, her sleeping, her low and continual cough.

"Well," she said, after the long examination, "how do you think I am?"

"I was just going to ask you that question," he answered; "nobody can tell better than yourself what you feel."

"Ah! you won't tell me! you think I am too young; I understand, sir, I know all, and I am not afraid."

The doctor was a kind-hearted man; he shook hands with her, and told her she was too low-spirited; but when Mr. Falconer followed him out, he perceived tears standing in his eyes. "Is she so bad, then?" he asked.

"'Tis strange," replied the medical man, "how resignation is almost always attendant on a youthful death-bed; like angels who have not long left their home, they are ever ready for their upward flight; it will soon be over with this poor girl, sir."

"I had hoped a more favourable result from your observations, doctor; she looks so much better since her arrival in Nice."

"Change of scene, of climate, and perhaps some pleasing impression, have retarded the hour, but not averted the evil; all hope is over. It would be of no avail to importune her with medicines, or impose on her disagreeable privations; let all her little caprices be gratified, and not a wish refused; let her last days be happy, if possible; let all those she has loved be called round her, for she will soon have closed her eyes on them all."

"Thank you," said Mr. Falconer, "for this conscientious statement; I am glad to hear the

truth, painful as it is, for mine will be the task of preparing both her and them ; I will attend to your advice in each particular."

" You shall see me again in a few days ; I often pass this road, and will call in. Tell my young countrywoman she must be more cheerful against my next visit, and I will endeavour to bring something to amuse her."

" Farewell, doctor, and thank you ; I will deliver your message."

Mr. Falconer saw his medical adviser down to his carriage on the road, then returned slowly, and with pensive steps, up the hill ; he paced the garden in front of the house about a quarter of an hour, then seemed to have made up his mind ; he walked up the stairs quickly, and entering the room of Monsieur de la Roche Ligné,—

" Excuse my intrusion," said he ; " I must speak to you, or you would reproach me hereafter with not having told you the truth in time."

Their interview was a long one ; not till an hour after did the room door open again. Mr. Falconer issued from it, called the lady's-maid, and gave orders that all who were with Mademoiselle Pauline should leave her for the present, even his own daughter. Before the sick girl had time to inquire into the cause of this desertion, she found her father kneeling by her bedside, hiding his face in the coverlets, and convulsed with sobs ; he, whom she had never seen weep since her mother's death. She stretched her arms to him ; he laid his head on the pillow by her side, but would not look at her. She endeavoured to soothe him, but all he said was,—

" Forgive me, my child, or I will never forgive myself."

But the girl would not suffer him to utter such words. Let him not think of what was past, she said; he had done it for the best, and Providence rules our destinies; it had been perhaps better for her so.

The anguish of his remorse was a little calmed; he embraced her, but when he felt the hollow cheeks: "So long," he said, "and I saw it not, my poor, poor child!" Then controlling his emotion. "Let me make all the reparation I can," he said; "the doctor advises to call round you all those you have loved; will you see *him*?"

She started up in her bed, clasped her hands, and a change came over her, as if a bright vision had appeared before her; for her eyes were upturned, and an ineffable smile lit up her features: "*His*!" she exclaimed, then slowly relapsing, and in a solemn tone: "Father! he has given himself to God?"

"But he has pronounced no vows as yet, my child; he can obtain leave to come and see you without incurring any blame; nor can the world pass a remark on his or your fair name, when *I will it* thus." Even in his repentance, the good gentleman could never give up the despotic language which was so natural to him.

Pauline leaned back in her bed, was silent for a few minutes; then, in a firm voice: "Father," she said, "I thank you for your kindness, but must answer, No! I will not begin anew the struggle I have had so long with my poor heart, and in which my strength has consumed away. To see him, and to repress my affection; to be near him, and to fear, lest that joy disturb the holy calm which ought to fill my soul, so soon to be reunited to God. Father, under

such conditions, No!" She paused for some time, then resumed: "Yet if Providence send me this consolation on my death-bed, I accept it with gratitude; but it must be sanctified by religion, consecrated by sacramental rites: as his wife, I will appear before the tribunal of God, and go on, before, to prepare for him that place above, he will one day share by my side. Father, write to him; tell him Pauline will see him, but only if he come and claim the hand that has waited for him so long."

The girl had spoken with so much decision, that M. de la Roche Ligné felt he could make no reply.

"I will do so, my loved one," he said; "this day's post shall bear your wishes to Del Monti; would to God I had consulted you long ago!"

"Say not so, dear father; this moment rewards me for much that is gone by."

He clasped her to his breast in silence for some seconds, then laid her back on her pillow, smoothed her hair, bade her close her eyes and sleep.

CHAPTER XX.

MISS FALCONER returned often to the sick-room, but each time found her young friend absorbed in a heavy sleep. At length, the hour came at which she generally returned home with her father; she stole once more to the chamber; Pauline opened her eyes, received her embrace, but her mind seemed unsettled. "I am going to sleep till he comes," she said; "don't wake me till then, I am so tired; pray very, very much for me, will you? for I am not able to, and yet I must thank the Blessed Virgin; will you undertake it?"

"I will, dear."

"To-morrow, don't forget; to-morrow, particularly."

Immacolata felt alarmed at her incoherence; she would have asked more, but the girl's eyes were already closed again; she left her, and joining her father below stairs, expressed to him her anxiety. "I am afraid," he said, "the shock of joy was too great, poor girl! yet it may produce a favourable reaction," and he apprised his daughter of all that had passed between him and M. de la Roche Ligné, and of that gentleman's sudden reversion of feelings and subsequent decision as to Del Monti. Miss Falconer was overjoyed to hear of it.

"When do you think he might be here?" she asked.

"The day after to-morrow, M. de la Roche

Ligné expects him ; but I wrote a separate letter by the same post, telling him to come by the *Service des Dépêches*, which arrives here to-morrow night, for I am afraid, unless a reaction comes on, the very hours of her life are numbered."

" So soon ! " exclaimed Ima, " and I love her as if I had known her for years. Papa, there is one thing I wish to do for her, if you have no objection ; you know what importance we Catholics attach to prayer."

" I ought to know it ; yes, love ; what then ? "

" And we consider, that although Almighty God be present everywhere, we are not to be blamed for setting apart some places more particularly to his worship."

" All right ! pretty theologian ; go on."

" And in the same way that we grow attached to a place where we have had some blessing conferred on us, so faith and gratitude have consecrated some sanctuaries where Providence has been more especially invoked, and has, consequently, been more abundant in its mercies ; and among our works of devotion we place pilgrimages ; I wish to perform one to our Lady of Laghetto."

" Not in the Lucrezia style, I hope, walking all the way."

" Oh no, papa ; but if you allow me to drive there to-morrow morning, I will take her with me, and shall only remain the time necessary for me to perform my devotions."

" Certainly, dear ; will you admit of my accompanying you ? I shall be rather a novel visitor to the Madonna, but I dare say she will not object to me."

"Oh, dear papa! 'twould be such an additional pleasure to me; I'm only afraid you will be tired out with having to wait for me, for there is nothing to see or amuse you."

"'Twill be my fault, as I go of my own accord; 'tis settled, then; I shall order the coachman to come at an early hour. Here we are at home, and here is Lucrezia with a letter for you; get down, my love, and retire to your room at once, in order that you may rise early."

"May I tell Lucrezia she is to come with us, papa?"

"Oh, by all means; good night, my love."

She went up, followed by her maid, and told her of the arrangements for next day, which announcement the girl hailed with great joy. It was not till after she had offered up an earnest prayer to God, in which petition and thanksgiving were mingled, that she opened her friend's letter, and read:—

"I have had nought to tell you since my marriage but happiness, dear Immacolata, and now a great sorrow and a painful parting are at hand; it is not my husband, thank God! I shall keep him at home some time yet, and he even promises me that his next voyage shall be his last; he only wishes for promotion, and then will leave me no more; but oh! Ima, it is always from the quarter we least expect it, that the blow comes. My dearest brother I should rejoice, but I am so fond of him that I weep at the thought; my dear James has given up his commission—renounced his military hard-earned honours, and in the face of every present advantages and future temporal blessings, has told us calmly and seri-

ously, he is giving himself up to God's service for the remainder of his days. We were afraid it was sudden, but he says he has thought of it long and often, probed his heart, weighed every consideration, and is quite decided. Mamma is resigned; papa feels it deeply, and I don't know what to say. It was your example, Ima, that made of him the fervent Catholic he has been for some time past; so you have indirectly a hand in this. 'Will he be a priest,' we have asked him, 'and live with us?' 'No!' he answered, 'I break with all ties to become the servant of Jesus; there is an order more especially devoted than others to the conversion of England; I have chosen my fate among the Passionists; there, as in the past, I will serve my country, in a nobler and holier cause.'

"Papa was so struck that he could raise no objection; he only said, 'Your career has been a glorious one, my boy; will you not pine after it? Oh, remember, and think well before a regret becomes in you an infraction of your views.' 'Father, had I taken this resolve in a moment of disappointment, had my military life been one of less success or less happiness, you might entertain doubts as to my steadiness; but now, it is in the height of youth and glory that I give up all, convinced of the truth of my Redeemer's words—'What doth it avail a man to gain the whole world if he lose his own soul?''"

"All that we can obtain from him is, that he will delay a month longer, and not give up his commission till his furlough expires; but his mind is made up, he says, and he will never change. Dear, good James! you know, Ima, what a friend and more than brother he has ever been to me. It seems true, indeed, that we can never have

complete happiness in this world ; he is taken from me just as Almighty God has given me George. But how can I repine, when my father and mother take it so religiously. I count each day as it passes by, dearest, because it brings me nearer to summer, and consequently, to the pleasure of seeing you again. You say your health has improved in beautiful Nice; George says, if you return there next winter, it will be about the time of his voyage, and he will take me to you, and leave me in your charge. I can't look forward, though, to parting from him ; 'twill be time enough when it comes. Write soon, dear Ima, and tell me when winter finishes in your part of the world, and mind you give up coughing, that you may be allowed to come home the sooner. I can't write a long letter to-day ; but knowing you would be interested in my poor brother, I was anxious to tell you all about him. Good bye ; pray for him, for my parents, and for

“ Your ever devoted

“ ELLEN IRVINGTON.”

Miss Falconer laid down the letter and put her hand to her forehead ; so many things had passed before her mind that day, that her head ached ; but, oh ! how thankful she felt that, by a merciful interposition of Providence, she had been the cause of this young man's life being spared, and his hand had remained guiltless of the blood of his friend ; he had since then remembered God, and now was called himself to work in his Master's vineyard ;—what a conquest ! How much sweeter to her heart, and flattering to her ambition, than all the applause she would have reaped in the world's admiration.

ously, he is giving the remainder suddenly, but he often, probed tion, and is papa feels ; say. It was the fervor past ; so he be a us ?

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Immacolata
as a pleasant sleep, which was only
at her bedside, with
it is morning and
will take three hours."
she started up ; "you
I hope."
signora ; there has been
some time."
but he is so kind, and always
ready to gratify me."
Her father was a short one ; so soon over, indeed,
she had her bonnet on before Lucrezia dis-
cerned the sound of carriage-wheels outside ; and
she highly enjoyed her father's surprise, who, on
sending down stairs to bid the coachman wait,
heard a merry laugh behind him, and found her
at his side. They set off. Lucrezia was put in-
side, owing to the cold of the morning ; she got
into a corner, and said her beads without ever
looking out. Mr. Falconer and his daughter
conversed in English over the contents of last
night's letter, which Immacolata communicated
to her father. When, after some time's smooth
driving, the carriage began to ascend a slope,
Lucrezia looked out : "We are near it now," she
said.

"My dear child," said Mr. Falconer, "I observe your maid is very assiduous at her devotions ; let me not disturb you if you feel that way inclined."

"Yes, papa, I wish to prepare for"—and she lowered her voice, as if speaking of something solemn ; "I am going to receive the Holy Communion."

"Do not mind me, then, dear ; I shall amuse myself with my thoughts."

The sun was just rising; its rays poured horizontally in through the carriage windows. Immacolata took out a little book and read; there was no more sound heard in the carriage but the beads of Lucrezia, as they rolled over her fingers one by one.

They passed the Turbior, whose colossal tower shows to this day what must have been the prodigious proportions of the edifice raised to commemorate the victories of Augustus in Liguria; the road then turned to the left, and descended, and there, on a waste and barren soil, built on rocks, from which have been hewn the stones for the building, rises a pretty church, with a convent and cloister attached to it. The coachman reverently touched his hat, and, turning to the travellers: "This is our Lady of Laghetto."

"Papa," asked Miss Falconer, "shall I call for some of the monks to come out and entertain you? There are very intelligent men among them, whom you will like."

"Ima is very severe upon me this morning; won't you allow me to go into the church with you?"

"Oh, dear papa, by all means! I was only afraid you would not like it."

He took her arm within his, perhaps with even a little more of tenderness than was his wont, but he did not speak again; he knelt down by her side for the first time, out of respect, she thought, for her feelings; but, by-and-by, the same mysterious power which had absorbed her whole soul in prayer, seemed to have passed into her father. When Immacolata rose to go and kneel at the altar-rail, her father's eyes followed her, but they were afterwards veiled with his hands, and he

raised them no more, for the light that was bursting on him came from within. Was it then come, the hour which had been so longed and prayed for, by the tender wife, the fervent and affectionate child? Was it given to Immacolata to see the completion of the great work bequeathed to her by her dying mother? Once before, she had offered towards this the sacrifice of her life; was it hope, was it thanksgiving, which prompted her to renew, at the foot of that altar, the vow of Jephthah's daughter, and consecrate to Jesus and his Virgin Mother a heart which had remained untouched by mortal love, and which implored victory for her father at the price of its virginity. The Holy Sacrifice terminated, the pilgrims left the altar, the sanctuary had become deserted; even the fervent Lucrezia had retired; Immacolata at length looked up, and finding she was quite alone with her father, told him it was time to withdraw. She went out the first, and, fearing lest her notice should appear disagreeable to him, she appeared quite taken up with a breakfast which the good father had laid out for them. "See, papa, are not these gentlemen hospitable? and this room bears the name of Charles Albert, because he spent a few hours here in his flight from Sardinia, after the unfortunate day of Novara. Sit down, papa, take this rather unroyal throne;" and she laughingly pushed towards him a straw armchair, covered with very faded cushions: "Shall I help you, papa? Do not look despidingly at this pewter coffee-pot; it has served kings; don't you feel something grand?"

"I do, indeed," he replied, as, following all her graceful movements, he enjoyed her light and pleasant talk.

"And now," she said, when they had done, "it is customary to visit the interior of the convent, but I am anxious to return to poor Pauline."

"You are right, dear; let us pay our respects to the fathers, and when we come back here, which will be as soon as you like, we will pay them a more lengthened visit."

They passed on to the small parlour, where the Superior, a man of plain but pleasing manners, wished them a happy journey, and hoped they would feel beneficial effects from their pilgrimage to Laghetto. "Our Lady is great!" he said, "and very good to us, but then we love her very much."

Mr. Falconer told him he would next time profit a little longer by his hospitality; for, being an artist, he would like to spend some days, and take views in the vicinity.

"With great pleasure," replied the monk, "and perhaps you would be good enough to paint something for the chapel."

"It is my intention; one of the frescoes, I perceive, is quite effaced, I will undertake it. I think the ornaments on the altar look also rather tarnished; please to employ this in restoring them," and he laid on the table a handsome donation; "it is a gift in the name of my daughter, a thanksgiving to the Madonna, by whom her prayers have been heard. Good-bye, padre, we shall meet soon again."

Immacolata did not look up at her father till she had reached the carriage. Lucrezia took her seat outside.

Mr. Falconer closed the door, and when he found himself alone with his child, he folded her in his arms. "Immacolata, you have conquered;

your goodness, your prayers, your sweetness have opened my eyes to the superiority of your religion ; I have long been a Catholic at heart, and will struggle with my convictions no more."

The happy girl was speechless for some moments ; tears streamed down her cheeks, and she wept, although her heart overflowed with joy. " Papa, why did you keep it from me so long ? "

" I had resolved, dear girl, and promised to myself, on marrying a Catholic wife, never to change my religion ; I maintained this resolve for years of wedded life, simply because I had formed it. When you came home to me, and I felt how you were bound to me, not only in yourself, but through the lost mother of whom you are a vivid image, I thought I would watch what Catholicism had done towards forming the heart of my child. I feared a convent education would have left you ignorant, unaccomplished, narrow-minded ; my surprise and joy were great, when I found in you your mother's gentle virtues, blended to the genius of an artist's child ; no dream could have been brighter than what I found in you. But when I studied your mind, and found all its beauty came from a source which was hidden to me, I wished to know what principles had formed it. I sought your books, and found in them precepts so pure, and a moral so elevated, that I understood Catholicism alone to be the key of the gospel, the only religion in which we can find truth. I hesitated still, from attachment to my old creed, from an unwillingness to change ; but I have now done with the world and its blame ; I must walk hand in hand through life with my child, my best and only love."

Her head had lain all this time on his breast; she raised it gently, and, embracing him, "Papa," she said, "mamma hears us, and must be very happy, just now."

"Poor Bianca? Oh! teach me, Ima, the prayer for the dead, and let my first Catholic act be offered for my angel wife."

The girl put her little book into her father's hands, and opening it at the *De Profundis*, they repeated it together, solemnly, and in a low voice.

"It seems," he said, as he concluded—"it seems to me as if I had found her anew in embracing her faith."

They pursued the remainder of the road in sweet, and often interrupted converse.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE morning had dawned upon Pauline's death-bed; yet that singular dispensation of nature, which often brings back renewed strength and vigour to the frame about to sink into the grave, had displayed itself in Mademoiselle de la Roche Ligné. She had awoke early, and a telegraphic despatch had been laid on her bed; Alberto del Monti would be with her that evening. It seemed as if life had been restored to her with that message; she asked to rise, and her attendants, fearful of the injurious effects which the doctor had declared contradiction might bring on, carried her on her mattress to a large sofa near the window, where she found the same rest as in bed, although she fancied she had left it. She wished to be dressed, and a loose white robe was wrapped round her; her hair must be adorned, she said, as is the wont of a bride; and with a skilful, yet gentle hand, her maid brought down over her temples the plain bands of her beautiful hair, now thinned by long sickness, and the crown of orange flowers was placed by her side; too like, alas, the funeral wreath which a maiden bears with her to the tomb.

When Miss Falconer, who, on her return from her morning expedition, had proceeded at once to St. Pons, entered the room, Pauline almost sat up to receive her, and it was with the greatest difficulty she could be persuaded to lie down again: "I feel so well," she said, "I almost think

joy will make me recover; life seems so beautiful, just now; papa is so good, you are my friend, and—he is coming.” She looked so happy and so pretty, with the bright colour in her cheeks and her eyes lit up, that Immacolata almost longed for her words to prove true; but it was too late! A little oil had been poured into her lamp, poor girl, and the flame burned purer and more bright; but the wick was cut already, and the light would soon be extinguished.

“You may get well again, if God wills it,” said her friend, after a moment’s silence.

“Ah!” replied the sick girl, “I don’t know; my happiness is too great to last long. I never, even as a child, felt a joy, but I knew sorrow was at hand. Ima, do you know why I have got ready so early?”

“No, indeed, dear, for M. del Monti cannot be here before evening.”

“Do you know what he comes for?”

“Yes,” said Immacolata, glancing at the bridal crown; “my father told me.”

“Marriage must be solemnized when we are in a state of grace, and I wish to confess and receive the holy communion; help me to prepare, will you?”

“Are you strong enough, dear, for so much exertion?”

“Is not Jesus our strength? I have heard you say so often; I have not loved Him in the past as faithfully as you have. I am perhaps going to Him soon, and I must die in peace with Him. Prepare me, Immacolata; it is perhaps my Viaticum.”

“Then I will send word at once to the parish church of Cimella, lest you should be fatigued by

a too long delay; I will desire your maid to go for a monk who can speak French."

"Do not forget that papa's permission must be asked first."

"True!"

She left the room, but had hardly been out of it a moment when she re-appeared: "I met my father," she said, "who will undertake it all very quietly; so now, dearest, do not let any thought disturb you."

She knelt down, and, from the fervour of her pure heart, offered up prayers which brought to her young friend an increase of light, of repentance, and of holy desire. She ceased, and left the young invalid to help herself; a rap at the door was heard, and Immacolata, on opening, received a Franciscan monk: "We were expecting you, father," she said.

"I came on first, signorina; the curé will soon follow with our blessed Lord; prepare, then, all that is necessary to honour His coming, while I offer my holy ministry to this sister in Christ." So saying, he approached the sofa on which Pauline reclined, and Miss Falconer withdrew. About a quarter of an hour after, the worthy father descended below stairs; but he would remain in the house, he said, for she was much worse than he expected to find her, and her soul had to be strengthened for the last combat. Immacolata returned to her friend, and, having arranged a small altar, and disposed flowers and candles thereon, awaited by her side the arrival of her divine Guest. A small tinkling bell announced the approach of the Blessed Sacrament; and as it passed through the fields, the peasants left their work and followed it, joining in the

prayers, which the priest uttered aloud; all remained kneeling outside the sick chamber. M. de la Roche Ligné had expressed his desire to leave the house during the ceremony, fearing lest the sight of his grief might injure his daughter, but she requested his presence and that of all her attendants. Pauline had become quite calm since the absolution she had received; she saw her state quite clearly now, and entertained no hope; but she was peaceful and resigned.

When the priest, entering the room, blessed her with the Sacred Host, and announced the presence of the Lamb of God, she made a sign that she wished to speak. The monk, who had previously heard her confession, came to her side, and asked aloud, "Are you resigned to accept, at God's hands, either life or death, as He pleases to bestow on you?"

"I am," she said, clasping her hands.

"Do you renew your belief in all that has been taught you by Christ and by His Church?"

"I do."

She whispered a few words, which he stooped to hear, and then repeated aloud: "She asks for the prayers of all, begging forgiveness of her father and of her servants for errors committed in the discharge of her duties towards them; let us all recommend our sister to God."

He knelt down, and, with his forehead touching the ground, recited the *Confiteor*. The priest approached, gave Pauline the Holy Communion, and all withdrew, save M. de la Roche Ligné, whose violent emotion, and efforts to conceal it, had been so great that he had sunk powerless into the arms of Mr. Falconer. He was removed with as

little disturbance as possible and unperceived by Pauline.

Oh, how long and yet how quickly they pass, the hours we spend by the bed where a loved spirit is departing. Anguish has taken up in our hearts the place where hope will come no more; even at the risk of lengthening their suffering, we would have them stay, even were they to live a lingering life on a bed of pain; oh, remain! remain at any cost! 'tis that our love is selfish, 'tis that not one of our feelings, noble though it be, but bears with it the taint of poor mortality.

The day passed, and twilight drew on. Pauline de la Roche Ligné had remained since her communion absorbed in holy thoughts, and the feverish impatience, so natural to a protracted illness, had quite left her.

When the sun went down, and the Angelus rang at the convent church, she awoke as if from sleep, and called Immacolata: "Is the altar ready?" she said. "Light the candles and put on my crown; it is time."

Her friend was afraid her mind wandered.

"It is time," she repeated; "he is close at hand; he will soon be here."

She did as the poor girl desired; and, to her surprise, heard, by the sound of strange voices and confusion below, that her presentiments had proved true. She dared not go to the door; Pauline fixed her eyes on it, smiled, said "Alberto," and closed her eyes.

There was a low cry, an apparition of a monk in white robes, and Alberto folded in his arms the girl he had so long loved. She raised her forehead to receive his embrace, then, putting up her

hands, as if to remove him : " It is not wrong, is it ? " she said.

" No, my own, my wife ! " he replied, taking her poor emaciated hands, and tears fell on them fast.

" Will you have me, Alberto ? you see what I am."

" I only left you for God, Pauline ; and now, at His call, I return, to call you mine, ere He part us again ; or, if it please Him, to leave you——"

" No ! no ! Alberto, you cannot deceive yourself thus ; I am quite resigned ; I am going to my Father, and to my heavenly home ; but that you might revere my memory as that of your lawful wife ; that you might remember me and love me, without detriment to the vows you will hereafter pronounce, I desired that you might come, but on no other condition than that of claiming my hand."

" I accept it, Pauline, though too late to make us happy ; it is a boon I am grateful for, and I have come prepared."

" Then, ring that bell, and they will come."

Immacolata was the first to answer her friend's well-known call : " Come here," said Pauline, as she stood hesitating at the door ; " you have met M. del Monti before."

" I remember him very well."

" And I, mademoiselle, have not forgotten our journey. How extraordinary is this our meeting ; how thankful am I to find in you the friend of Pauline."

" If you are ready," replied Miss Falconer, " the monk awaits below ; he has been appointed by his superior to perform the marriage in French ; my father will act as witness, and——"

"Let all come," said Pauline; "I do not wish it to be secret."

In a few minutes, the room was filled as it had been in the morning. Her father embraced her, and withdrew to the foot of the sofa; the monk who was to officiate came to her side; Del Monti continued holding her hand. The monk robed and opened the holy Gospels: he read the short but impressive service, blessed the nuptial ring, which Del Monti received kneeling, then placed it on the hand of his bride, and called the benediction of Heaven on the nuptial deathbed. It was performed—the union so soon to be dissolved—and all the assistants retiring, left them alone, the husband and his dying bride.

For two hours there was silence in the house; silence below, where every one listened, and was occupied with solemn and anxious thoughts. There was a whispered silence above—the last words exchanged on the brink of the tomb between those who had been linked in holy bonds. The reverend Father who had performed the marriage rites remained below in attendance, and had obtained leave to spend all that night out of his convent, for he thought the lady would require before morning the last succours of the Church, and his foresight proved true.

Three hours had elapsed—an anxious voice was heard calling from the staircase—Mr. Falconer hurried up alone—he returned a moment after. "Her strength is fast failing," he said, "but she is still sensible. Padre, it is time to perform the last duties; Immacolata, go to her; she requires more aid than poor Del Monti can give alone."

Miss Falconer left the room at once.

"My dear friend," he said to M. de la Roche Ligné, "if you can bear the trying moment, I think she wishes for you, for she turned her head towards me as I entered.

"I will! I will!" returned the unhappy father. "Oh, that I had thought more and sooner of her happiness!"

"God help him!" said Mr. Falconer, looking after him; "his will indeed be after and bitter reflections. Let none," he said, "turning round to the assembled household—"let none approach the room of your young mistress but such as understand the duty they owe to such an hour; prayer is the only aid you can offer her now. Henri, my poor child," and he drew the weeping boy towards him, "you love Pauline, do you not?"

He only answered by convulsive sobs.

"Then you ought to wish for that good part she has chosen for herself—a home with her Father in Heaven."

"Ah me!" he exclaimed, "let me go to her, sir; I will be calm."

"Go, then; but, remember, I trust to you; disturb not her last moments."

One by one all had left the apartment, and gone up to the death-room. Mr. Falconer followed. Intelligence was still visible in Pauline's eye, although she had lost her speech. A smile played on her lips—a light and joyous one—as Henri kissed her. She held out her hand to her father, and then, looking at the monk, stretched out her arms for the holy unction. Alberto understood her, and uncovered her feet; then raised her hair and disposed her dress. No one helped him; all seemed to understand that was

his right and his duty now. In a faltering voice he made the responses to the prayers prescribed by the Church; Pauline's lips moved; but, like those of an infant, they uttered no sound. We enter life and we leave it alike; the impotence of childhood is attendant on our last hour. The Sacrament of the dying had been conferred; Alberto folded her unresisting hands, and placed in them the long rosary which hung at his girdle. The cross was still there, which had been to him a memory of her, cherished as the parting gift of the beloved girl, now rendered sacred by the last pangs of the expiring wife. She recognized it, and a gleam of joy was visible on her countenance; her eyes turned gratefully to her husband. He placed the sacred symbol on her lips; she kissed it with a dying effort; and in that kiss, where was mingled a living love and an immortal faith, her soul breathed its last earthly sigh!

Sobs, till then repressed, now broke forth in that sad room. Mr. Falconer, who thought for all, repressed his own feelings, the better to comfort the unhappy father and his boy; he led them out, and removed his own daughter from the bed, where she had remained with great fortitude to the last. He returned to call away Del Monti, but could not prevail on him to leave. "My place is here," he said; "I will not leave her till she is consigned to the grave."

The night passed, and the next day found him still watching the frail tenement, houseless and abandoned; the spirit, he knew, was on high.

CHAPTER XXII.

A WEEK later, there was a travelling carriage at the foot of Cimiez hill, awaiting the return of a lighter vehicle, which had taken some visitors up to the convent. There passed but little conversation between them, and that was expressive of a great sorrow that had passed, and an approaching separation which was at hand. When they had reached the piazza in front of the church, a monk of the Dominican order, who seemed waiting for them, came forward: "I did not wish to enter before you," he said, with a melancholy smile, "yet I have been here some time." He helped a young lady to alight; she looked at him, weeping bitterly, then taking the arm of her father, who followed her, proceeded at once to the churchyard. The monk then led by the hand a young boy, whom he called brother, and both waited till the last occupant of the carriage had descended; it was a gentleman whose features, though stern, were deeply marked by grief. He went on, opened the iron gate which enclosed the cemetery, and entered. A guardian was within, who, having been apprised of their coming, led the way at once to the furthest extremity on the slope of the hill, where was a marble cross newly erected, and its inscription in gilt letters looked bright in the sun and pleasant to see:—

"TO THE MEMORY OF PAULINE DEL MONTI."

All knelt; the monk, bowing low in deep and silent prayer, kissed the soil, then recited the *De*

Profundis aloud, and rising with an effort: "Adieu, adieu! my dear one," he said, "our meeting shall be hereafter."

He went out, the father and the boy remained still kneeling, the rest of the party joined him outside: "Even so," said the young girl, accosting him—"even as she had wished; her tomb bears the name she longed for. 'If I die in Nice,' she said, 'I should like to be buried near that old abbey.' She had, poor dear, connected in her imagination yourself with the idea of a convent, and she hoped her remains might be some day visited by you."

"Strange! strange!" he replied, folding his arms within his sleeves; "it has been so, poor Pauline. I am very thankful, although I return to my monk's life with a wound which it will take long to heal—I am thankful that I arrived in time, and consoled her last hour."

At that moment, M. de la Roche Ligné appeared; Henri rushed into the monk's arms, and embraced him tenderly again and again, till he was interrupted by a hand laid heavily on his shoulder: "Son," said the old man, whose countenance had within the last few days undergone a change as if years had passed over it, "we part at this grave, which is sacred to both thee and me—hast thou forgiven me?"

"Father!" exclaimed the young monk, taking his proffered hand and kissing it fondly—"father, since thou permittest me to give thee this name, would it were in my power to efface the past from thy memory; fain would I devote my life to thee, but I have promised it to God. Speak not of forgiveness! I am grateful to thee, and when these hands, purified by the priestly unction, shall be

accounted worthy to hold up the Spotless Victim, it shall be offered on God's altar for thee and for her."

"Thy words comfort me, my son; farewell, then. I go home to France with Henri; a desolate home it will be, alas! Mr. Falconer, kind friend, farewell! Immacolata, whose love was to my poor child that of a sister, take from me a father's kiss. Farewell! On your way back to England, remember the town of Avignon, where Henri and I shall never forget you more." He waved his hand, and the carriage drove with them down the hill.

Del Monti entered the convent to give his wife's tomb in especial charge to the fathers of Cimella, and then proceeded, with Mr. and Miss Falconer, down the hill to St. Pons, where he had taken up his abode. "And we, too, must part again," he said; "how short-lived, and yet how eventful, has been my acquaintance with you. I would have wished to see you oftener, and called on you several times in the course of this last week, but found you were out of town."

"Yes," said Mr. Falconer, smiling gravely; "has Ima not told you where we went to, and what occupied me?"

"No, indeed, papa; but may I now?"

"It is needless, signorina," said the monk, observing that as they passed before a cross, Mr. Falconer reverently touched his hat. "I understand you; since our first meeting I never forgot to unite in prayer with you, and I see that prayer has been heard. I wish you joy, sir, with all my heart; to such a mind as yours truth must be a necessity, and I only wonder how you withstood its light so long."

"A little obstinacy, my good friend. A good deal of vanity enters into the character of most of us, nor am I better than my fellow-men; but I am, thank God, a confirmed Catholic, and will hold on fast. Will you not dine with us before you leave Nice? We have had so much melancholy, let us pass a cheerful day together."

"Thank you, sir, I cannot; the permission I obtained to leave my convent is an extraordinary one, and only fitted to the peculiar emergency of the case. I dare not infringe on my monastic rules; for that I took up my abode at St. Pons; my leave of absence expires this evening; I must return to Turin. With an aching and a grateful heart, sir, I wish you good-bye: that your days may be long I fondly hope; that they may be ripe in blessings will be my constant prayer. Signorina, to whom I owe so much, my wife's last blessing is yours; and when the poor monk remembers his lost and only love, he cannot fail to invoke God's graces on the gentle heart which strengthened and consoled her. God keep you as you are, for your own happiness and your father's. We shall all meet above."

They had reached the foot of the hill; a carriage awaited them on the high road; they parted. He returned towards the convent, and, standing on the verge of the hill, he continued waving his white robes as a farewell till they could see him no more.

CHAPTER XXIII.

WINTER had quite gone; the first breath of spring hushed the last murmurs of the mistral wind; the sea rippled, and its waves rolled gently over the pebbles of the shore, but its anger was over now. The orange groves grew white under their flowery burden, and a perfume so deep, that it was almost overpowering, overspread the gardens of Nice; and now began the harvest so peculiar to that favoured clime, the culling of the orange-flowers. The hill of the Lazzaretto had likewise a tribute to yield, and the garden of the Villa Bermond was filled with merry workwomen, whom Miss Falconer watched from her window. She had sent out Lucrezia to take part in the pleasant pastime. Mr. Falconer had spent the morning writing in his room; she had been alone part of the day, and her thoughts, reverting to the events of the preceding week, were gloomy, and prevented her from taking up any interesting occupation. Wearied with her protracted loneliness, she left the window, and went to rap at her father's door. He opened it himself: "I was going to join you, my love, and talk over our plans."

"Shall I come in then, papa, or will you walk out with me?"

"Come and sit down by me." She took a chair by his side: "I think, dear girl," he said, patting her cheek, "that Nice has been favour-

able to you, and that you have derived from it all the benefit it could possibly give."

"Yes, papa, I am quite strong now; I sleep and eat almost as well as a mountain girl, and I think there is nothing to keep us here. When shall we go home?"

"Ah, do you pine northwards, my pretty one? That is fidelity, indeed; under such a sky as this, I should have supposed you had acquired more Italian tastes."

"I suppose, papa, I am influenced by the melancholy remembrance of poor Pauline; but I really feel a great wish to leave."

"And I was just making arrangements to that purpose, dearest, but wished to consult you first."

"Oh, I am quite ready, papa."

"I do not mean, though, to return to England at once."

"Ah!"

"We will visit the north of Italy; that will improve you, and we shall spend a month in Florence."

"Yes, papa, I should like that very much."

"It is besides quite necessary you should see your birthplace; we will remain there till we are driven away by the heat, and return to England in the summer. Does this arrangement meet Ima's approbation?"

"Quite, quite, papa; I think it delightful."

"How many days will it take you to get ready? I should like to take advantage of this fine weather, and set out this week."

"Oh, I have very little to do, papa, in the way of packing; Lucrezia can have all my things ready for the day after to-morrow, if you like."

"That will just do, for the boat for Genoa sails on Friday."

"Very well, papa; I will begin my preparations at once;" and she left him.

A quarter of an hour afterwards, Lucrezia had been summoned from the orange-flower harvest, and was receiving her young mistress's orders, but she showed no willingness to obey them. She remained standing, with her arms folded, and without speaking or moving.

"You are thinking of something else, perhaps, Lucrezia, and do not understand me."

"Oh yes, signorina, too well, too well."

"What do you mean, my girl?"

"The signorina is going, leaving Nice, leaving poor Lucrezia who loves her so dearly."

"It is very good of you to be so affectionate, Lucrezia; but you know I must go; I came here for the winter only."

"I know it, signorina; but that does not prevent me from being henceforth very miserable."

"This is your country, girl, and your relations are here."

"My relations! They do not want me; I must continue to serve and earn my bread; but, ah me! why must I lose you? Can you not take me with you, signorina? I know all your little wants, and will take such care of you, I will be so faithful to you. I will follow you everywhere until you marry; and, if you allow me, until your death."

"I shall never marry, Lucrezia."

"I thought so, signorina. You are more beautiful than many ladies; but those who love Jesus as you do cannot love man too. I knew from the first you would enter a convent were it not for

your father, and that is why I loved you more and more: and I cannot leave you, lady. Oh, take me with you! take me with you!" She knelt down by the side of her young mistress, raised her hands, and, in an imploring voice, repeated again and again her request.

"I will ask papa, Lucrezia; but, if he permits, and you follow me to a strange land, what will become of you? I cannot promise to remain always as young as I am, nor always to require a maid to take care of me."

"I know what you mean, lady, you will enter a convent; but Lucrezia will follow you there, and serve God with you."

"How did you know that was my wish?"

"Oh, lady, I saw it in you the first day I knew you, because I myself have the same call; I have felt it ever since Beppo's death. When I shall have put aside sufficient money to make me a dowry, I will take it with me to a convent; so, whether it be here, lady, or whether it be there, you take me away from no one, for a monastery shall be my end."

"I will do my best with papa, Lucrezia, since you are so determined; meanwhile get my things in order, that I may tell him you are useful to me."

It did not take many words to induce Mr. Falconer to accede to the poor girl's request: "Certainly, my dear; I regretted having let you come so far without a servant. The journey we have in view, being longer and much more fatiguing, I think you will require additional comforts, and a faithful servant is something so precious, that we must insure Lucrezia by all means. You may tell her so, my love, with my best compliments."

Thus all parties were satisfied, and, two days

after, our friends were embarking on board the steam-boat *Dante* for Genoa, to proceed from thence to Leghorn. On reaching the quay, Mr. Falconer found he had forgotten some letters on his dressing-table at the Villa. He asked if there was time to go back, and fetch them before the vessel sailed.

"Oh quite, quite, sir, I assure you," replied the captain; "we are never punctual."

Lucrezia offered to go back, saying she was sure to find what her padrone wanted.

"No!" he replied. "Go in and secure a cabin for your mistress, and stay with her till I return."

He was gone a very short time; but, on his return, Immacolata thought she saw a change in his features: "Have you heard of something disagreeable, papa, or has anything annoyed you?"

"No, my love; but as I came down the garden rather quickly, I slipped on some wet orange-flowers in the walk, and struck the back of my head against a tree; the blow has somewhat stunned me."

"Oh, papa, let me put arnica to it; come and lie down, or the motion of the vessel will make your head ache."

"No, dear, thank you; I enjoy this fresh sea-air, and will not go down stairs yet; don't mind, it is nothing at all."

Miss Falconer, reassured, stood by his side on deck, watching the town as it receded from their sight, then the bay, then the distant lighthouse.

Lucrezia pointed out a rock to her: "'Twas there!" she said, and turned mournfully away.

An hour after, land was no longer visible.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A few days sufficed for our travellers to make themselves acquainted with Genoa, its gardens and palaces; they proceeded to Florence, where they were to spend the spring, and return northwards through Lombardy and Switzerland. With infinite delight Mr. Falconer reviewed his old haunts, and received the visits and congratulations of his brother-artists, to many of whom he was known personally, and to all by name. Nor did Immacolata feel herself a stranger in the town she had heard so much of, and often longed to see: her well-cultivated mind enjoyed the historical recollections of the city of the Medici, so mediæval still in its structure, and even in many of its customs. She visited with a deep emotion the house her mother had dwelt in as a girl, and the churchyard where the remains of that dear parent were laid. There she lay, Bianca Falconer, with her aged father, under the shade of the gaggia-tree; and could her spirit have haunted that grave, it would have rejoiced at the sight of her child, pure and good as her fondest hopes could have made her, with a heart spotless as her name; it would have rejoiced that the husband, whom she had so much loved, came to kneel on her grave, and pray in her faith by the side of his living convent flower.

Immacolata was gladdened at the sight of that tree, as of an old friend; it had consoled her in many childish sorrows, and accompanied her

through so many events of her life. It was a time of complete enjoyment to them, the month they spent in Florence; but Mr. Falconer had frequently felt indispositions and headaches, which he attributed to pleasurable excitement, and they resolved to spend some days of complete rest before they set out again. Immacolata was surprised to find repose agree even less with her father; day after day, he complained more and more, and they were obliged to have recourse to medical advice. He was confined to his bed, and his numerous friends were in continual attendance, but soon even the pleasure of seeing them became too fatiguing; his headaches were violent and continual, and the various and repeated questions of the doctor opened Miss Falconer's eyes to the alarming state of her beloved parent. Had he received any blow on the head was asked her many times, and when, at length, she remembered the fall he had met with on the very day he left Nice, the cause of his sufferings was explained; an abscess had been forming in the back of the head, which would bring on brain fever, and probably death. No one dared apprise Miss Falconer of the truth, but she had an instinctive perception of how much she had to fear. She redoubled her care and attention; Lucrezia and she sat up each night in turn, sometimes both together, and it was at such times Ima found how invaluable were to her the comfort and aid of the faithful girl.

Mr. Falconer became delirious, and his friends removed his daughter from his bedside, and attended to him themselves. A few days' burning fever sufficed to exhaust his vigorous frame; as his strength failed his reason returned; he called

for his daughter. For a day and a night, the fond girl remained by his side, clinging to a hope, listening to his failing voice, vainly seeking for the return of life in those eyes which loved her so dearly, even now lighting up at the sound of her voice, although their sight was almost gone.

The night passed, and all attempts to withdraw Miss Falconer from her position were vain; her father had placed his arm round her neck, and would not let her go. At length, his breathing became heavy, ceased for several seconds, then rallied again; there was a long, low protracted moan, a sound of which no one could tell whether it came from the living or the dead; the tearing asunder of two souls, of which one was taken, the other was left—the arm which held Immacolata had lost its hold.

CHAPTER XXV.

IN a small dining-room on the ground-floor, the doors of which opened on a pleasant garden, and let in the balmy air which ushers in the first days of an English summer, sat at a breakfast-table the Rev. Mr. Baroni. He held in his hand an open letter edged with black; and although the tea-urn hissed, and the neat symmetry of the table showed the meal had as yet been untouched, still nothing could draw his attention from the closely-written pages. He had received other letters, in the same hand, for some months back; but this seemed to excite in his mind deep attention and sympathy. An exclamation of grief and horror had escaped him on the first opening of it, and as he went on, tears moistened his eyes and rolled down on the paper. "Poor girl!" he exclaimed more than once, "what a trial! what fortitude and piety!" When he had concluded, he pressed his hands to his eyes, but the tears would not go back. He let them flow, and when he had sufficiently regained his composure, he rose, took his hat and walked out. An elderly servant-woman, coming in to take away the tea-things, shrieked in utter dismay at her master's not having touched his breakfast, and implored him to return, assuring him it was not a fast-day.

"I know it," he said, "but I cannot take anything this morning;" and, shutting the door to prevent further discussion, went his way in the direction of Ivy Cottage. He looked so sad, that

Mrs. O'Sullivan, shocked at his appearance, anxiously inquired what misfortune had occurred.

"Send for your daughter," he replied, "for her mother-in-law, and all Mr. Falconer's best friends; I have melancholy news to announce to them."

"Oh, my God! is it possible,—Ima, my poor, dear Ima?"

"No, not she; the flower has been spared and the strong oak taken; Mr. Falconer is dead."

Mrs. O'Sullivan was horror-struck; her husband, who came in at the same moment, was hardly less grieved; servants were despatched to their friends, and in a few minutes the small parlour of Ivy Cottage was crowded with sympathizing and sorrowing neighbours.

Mr. Baroni read aloud some passages of Ima's letter, which drew tears from all present. "Let our comfort be, that our friend Mr. Falconer departed this life a son of the Holy Catholic Church; and although his mind was too much disturbed to admit of his receiving the sacraments at the last moment, he had approached the Holy Communion a few days before his death, and his daughter tells us his short intervals of suffering were all filled up with prayer. To-morrow morning we will chant a mass for the repose of his soul, at which, I make no doubt, all the parish will be present."

After some more conversation on the melancholy event, all withdrew, with the exception of the Irvingtons; and Mr. Baroni, giving Ellen the letter, bade her read it entirely, that she might see what was best to be done.

"Immacolata had not been isolated, she said, although in a strange land; her father's friends were numerous, and all duties of a harrowing

nature had been spared her. Her father's remains had been consigned with great honour to the tomb, and his brother-artists would raise a beautiful monument to his memory. Several of their families had asked her to stay among them; but what was there for her in a land where all her love had been buried in two graves? She would return to England, there to fulfil the ardent wish of her childhood, which had grown with her growth, and consecrate her life to God. She brought with her a faithful Italian girl as an attendant; one of her father's friends would take her to Leghorn, and see her on board a steamer bound for Marseilles; there she would take the railroad straight to Paris; but, once there, she wished some one from home would come to meet her, as that was the most difficult part of the journey. She would be there on such a day, she said, and hoped Mr. Baroni would engage to have some one waiting for her there; she begged of him to communicate all she told him to her friends, and tell them her heart was too heavy to write to them separately."

"I'll go myself," exclaimed Ellen's father as she concluded the letter; and starting to his feet, and buttoning up his coat, seemed to profess himself ready that very minute.

"My dear," exclaimed his wife, in evident alarm, "don't think of such a thing; you have never been out of England, and can't speak French."

"I'll give up George," said Ellen, "for a few days; she must have an old friend by her,—poor Ima!"

"No, love," replied her husband, "that won't do, for I'm only a sailor; besides, my first visit to Paris must be with you, and I wouldn't take you

on a trip like this where you'd have no enjoyment. There's James now, who knows all languages by heart; has travelled the world over, and has nothing to do. Do you go, James; only take care you don't bundle her into a convent on the road and put yourself into another. We must have fair play: if we are to lose you both, we must have a last look at you before we part."

"I will undertake with pleasure the going for Miss Falconer," replied James, "and in order to be there before her, I think, father, I must leave this to-morrow."

This point being settled, Mr. Baroni took his leave, and Mrs. O'Sullivan immediately began making preparations for her son's journey, and Ellen set to writing to her friend.

CHAPTER XXVI.

SHE had come and gone, the flower of the village of ———; she had spent a few days in her old residence, and then fled to the convent home after which she had so often pined. Laburnum Cottage and all its furniture she had left as a parting gift to Ellen; and in the spoliation of her worldly goods, the poor had had an abundant share. Not a duty had been omitted; not a kind act forgotten; she was free to dispose of her newly-acquired liberty, and she immolated it, a willing offering at the altar of God.

It was an affecting scene, the farewell of Immacolata. She had wished it to be private, but her own emotion on embracing her friends that morning had revealed her intended departure. They followed her to the chapel, where she knelt for the last time, and where the Rev. Mr. Baroni administered to her the Blessed Sacrament, which was to strengthen her for the duties of her new career. A carriage was at the door, bearing trunks as if for a journey. Lucrezia knelt on the door steps—her old Italian habit—and on either side of her had assembled the village children, many of whom wept.

When Immacolata issued from the chapel, she had to pass from the arms of Mrs. O'Sullivan to her husband, and back again to Mrs. Irvington; all wept as if their hearts would break: "It is too much, kind friends," she said, "too much for me; you unnerve me."

Mr. Baroni came up, and his remonstrances put an end to the trying scene. "Why distress her," he said, "when she has gone through so much? She is not going to the end of the world; to the Sacred Heart in the town of —, and you can often go to see her. Come, Miss Falconer, I go with you; one friend, at least, shall accompany you to the end." He handed her into the carriage, then took his place by her side; Immacolata waved her handkerchief; then fell back sobbing.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Six months have elapsed; all goes on the same in the village of——. Ellen has taken up her residence at Laburnum Hill, and great joy is in the family, for she expects soon to be a mother. She hopes, nay, even prays that the little stranger may be a girl, that she may be consecrated to the Blessed Virgin, and bear the name of Immacolata; and George, who cannot contradict his little wife, although he prefers a boy, settles the matter by hoping they shall be blessed with twins, one of each sex.

James is gone; he disappeared shortly after Miss Falconer went, and has since written that he is destined for the continent; he will be allowed to come home and bid good-bye to his relations before entering the noviciate.

Immacolata has been often visited by her friends, and expresses herself happy and cheerful; her health was not so good, though, as it had been in Italy; her troublesome cough had returned, and the superioress, thinking that another English winter would prove too severe for her delicate constitution, had decided that at the close of her postulate she should go to France immediately after taking the veil. It pained her to leave again her old convent, to which she was endeared by so many associations; she almost thought she would have been satisfied to have her life shortened, and to die there, but she submitted. The day was

fixed for her to take the veil, and she wrote to tell them so. Mr. Baroni called on the superioress, and requested permission to perform this last duty towards a girl who had so many claims upon him, and whom he was perhaps to see no more. He found his request forestalled; the chaplain of the convent had sent to invite him to preside at the ceremony, which would be a peculiarly solemn one; five young ladies were to be professed, Immacolata and her humble friend Lucrezia were both to take the veil. The Italian peasant had been to all her companions a model of edification and unobtrusive piety, during her first probation, and rejoiced that her first step in the holy career was to be performed by the side of her young mistress.

The morning came, and there was a great *fête* at the convent, a ringing of bells, and all the demonstrations of public joy; and the whole community surrounded with sisterly love the new brides of the Lord.

Immacolata had passed a restless night; she had been ailing for some time past, and when her former attendant visited her bedside, and asked leave to dress her, and perform for the last time the duties of the past,—

“You are ill, signorina,” she said; “you should not leave your bed.”

“Hush! Lucrezia; immediately the ceremony is over I will come and lie down, but speak not of it beforehand; think you I would forego the bliss of this day? Let me go, girl; our blessed Lord awaits me.” And as she rose, weak and tottering as death, yet her eyes kindled with a holy enthusiasm, she looked, indeed, as if the Lord had spoken, and the hour were come when no other

sound could meet her ear, but the voice of the bridegroom that saith—Come!

Before mass she was summoned to the parlour, where her old friends, the O'Sullivans and Irvingtons, crowded round her. She looked so beautiful in her white silk dress and veil and bridal ornaments, so holy in her demeanour, that a burst of admiration broke from them all, and there was a moment's hesitation before any of them embraced her.

"My darling girl," began Mrs. O'Sullivan, "I had hoped to see you stronger than this; you appear to be suffering."

"A little fatigue, which makes me pale, perhaps. Oh! how glad I am to see you all again."

"Think of me, Miss Falconer, and pray for me," broke in George; "I am excluded from the chapel. Is it not too hard for a married man, and father of a family that is to be, to find he can't assist at the ceremony of your taking the veil?"

"I am sorry to hear it, Mr. Irvington, but our chapel, being a private one, cannot admit of gentlemen; I think, though, Mr. Baroni might find a place for you in the sacristy. Oh! you too," she exclaimed, as a young man in a priest's dress came forward. "How kind of you all to remember me."

"The Convent Flower sowed the seeds of my vocation," replied James, "and I came to implore God's blessings on hers; is it not just? I am to serve Mr. Baroni's mass."

"Ah! none are wanting in this circle, but——" and her eyes filled with tears.

"They are in heaven, Ima," said Ellen, kissing her, "and both rejoice with you to-day; dear, courageous Ima, do not be cast down."

"No; thank God, I am calm; more so than I expected to be; but there is the bell ringing; dear, kind friends, we shall meet in the chapel; pray for me all; good-bye, good-bye."

She hurried out, and went by a private doorway to the chapel, where they saw her afterwards, kneeling behind the novices; Lucrezia was by her side.

The moment came for the Holy Communion, and the seven young women, holding lighted tapers, went to kneel at the altar, from which they were to arise, each a willing victim consecrated to God's glory.

Mr. Baroni received their vows, and when he came to Immacolata there was a tremulousness in his voice, as he asked her, in the terms prescribed for the ceremony, "What she came to ask of the Lord?"

"To be admitted," she replied firmly, "into the order of His Sacred Heart; for I have loved the beauty of the house of my God, and the glory of his tabernacle, and I have chosen to dwell in it for ever."

"You are not bound by any promise which you may have previously made to man?"

"No!" she replied, with an intonation of unspeakable joy.

"Then accept, in the name of the Lord, this veil and, this habit, and with it renounce all worldly vanity, in order that you may be clothed with Christ."

She withdrew, for she had no vows to pronounce aloud, although perhaps she had already offered them in her heart. One of the aged sisters led her out of the chapel, and she reappeared shortly after, her hair cut, and attired in the garb of a

nun. The five novices, who were completing their profession, were lying prostrate on the floor, and a funeral pall was extended over them, while the priest and the sisterhood chaunted the prayers for the dead, for it was a living death those young hearts had chosen, to be dissolved and die with Christ. Immacolata's place was not with them, and yet she lay down by their side. The assistants were surprised, yet no one spoke, for fear of disturbing the ceremony, and the pall continued to be held over all. When the last words of the death prayers were concluded, the young sisters arose, but Immacolata moved not; she was called, but did not answer. The Superiororess raised her up, and found blood had gushed from her mouth, and spread over the floor she had lain on. Horror-stricken, she pressed her to her arms; Mr. Baroni, who had concluded the service, came to her assistance. Miss Falconer's exertions, in her excessively weak state, had proved fatal, she had burst a blood-vessel, and death had been instantaneous.

They carried her into the sacristy, where all succours were offered to her, but in vain: "Take your wife away," whispered Mr. Baroni to George, "she must be spared this dreadful sight."

And the young man, rushing through the chapel to that part of it where Ellen was placed, carried her out, almost in his arms, and gave vague answers to her inquiries. He took her to the parlour, where her mother followed him: "Keep her here," he said, and returned at once to the chapel, offering to go for a surgeon, or whatever was needed, but it was out of human power to aid her now. They carried her to her cell,

and laid her on a bed, around which the whole community, by turns, spent the day in prayer. The pure spirit had inhabited its tenement till it had fulfilled its promise to God; once the consecration accomplished, it had winged its flight upwards.

When her funeral was spoken of: "It shall take place here," said the Superioress, "within our precincts. We were about to proceed to the construction of a little private cemetery on our own grounds; let a place be consecrated for our poor convent flower; she loved us in life, and shall not leave us in death; the sight of her grave shall keep alive among us the memory of her virtues and the influence of her bright example."

And it was so; a few days after, the bells of the chapel tolled a funeral dirge, and a bier was carried through the garden, so decked with white ribbons, so covered with flowers, that had it not been for the veil and bridal crown which lay thereon, one might have supposed it rather a procession in honour of the Blessed Virgin than a corpse carried to its resting-place.

All the girls preceded in white dresses, and the pall was borne by four of the new sisters who had pronounced their vows with her; the first place was assigned to Lucrezia, whose emotion was uncontrollable.

The entire community followed, with their veils lowered over their faces, and many eyes were wet, and their voices trembled as they joined in the responses. By an extraordinary privilege, those friends who had been to Immacolata as her relations were allowed to enter the convent walls, and follow her to the grave. James aided Mr. Baroni

in reading the funeral chaunt. Mr. O'Sullivan and George followed as chief mourners. The plan of the cemetery had been drawn out near the shrine of the Blessed Virgin, where Immacolata had so often knelt in her lifetime, where her tiny hands had sown the gaggia-tree, whose branches now flowered over an open grave. The last prayers were said, the coffin lowered, and the handful of earth, emblematical of final destruction, was thrown over the flowers, now fading to sight—"Dust to dust!"

The melancholy procession withdrew.

When all was over, George and James remained alone, and there, side by side, kneeling over the remains of the girl who had exercised such a powerful influence on their lives, they wept at the remembrance of that deplorable illness which had originated in her generous endeavours to save them. Mr. Baroni came up, and laying a hand on the shoulder of each of them, he bid them rise. Traces of tears were visible on his countenance, too: "We all feel what we have lost," he said; "nor am I ashamed, my dear young friends, that you should be witnesses to an old man's emotion. I also have a lesson to learn from the young girl who lies there in the cold ground. 'Tis that we ought to tread the path of duty with a firm step, and be mindful of the work our Heavenly Father has given us to do. How much did she accomplish in her short career! what have been the fruits of her good example and unobtrusive piety! Yourselves preserved from a dreadful fate, and the remorse of a whole life spared to one or the other of you; the conversion of George; the religious vocation of James; her father brought back to the true faith—Verily, He who

is powerful has done for her great things, and hallowed be His name ! ' ' "

For several days, nay weeks, after Immacolata's funeral, there was not a dry eye in the village, where she had been a friend to the poor, a comforter to the desolate, and a bright example to all. Ellen mourned for her as for a sister, nor could George's entreaties prevail on her to put aside the deep crape and black garments, which he feared saddened her too much.

Not until three months later, when a smiling infant was given to her, did she consent to forget past sorrow in her present mother's joy ; the little one was a girl, and Ellen's piety insisted, that the same day should see her born to life and born to Jesus, and regenerated at the baptismal font under the name of her lamented friend.

Mr. Baroni performed the ceremony with a heartfelt and visible joy ; and after he had taken off his surplice and stole, " Give her to me, George," he said ; " let me kiss her, as much as her fine laces and frills will permit me. God bless thee, little stranger, who art come to take among us the place a sainted girl has left void ! Thou promisest to be beautiful, may thy mind be like hers, pure and untainted by the world ; mayest thou grow up our pride and our joy, bearing to the Judgment Seat of God the stainless robe I have given thee this day ; mayest thou verily be another Immacolata, or Convent Flower ! "

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